A DIALOGUE
ON THE
BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT

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B. B. R. A. C.

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BY THE RIGHT HONORABLE

SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS,

BART., M.P.

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LONDON

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PREFACE.

FROM the birth of political speculation down to a recent period, treatises on politics generally assumed the character of enquiries into the perfect state, or into the best form of government. This was the exclusive object of the Republic of Plato. Even the Politics of Aristotle, though they dealt more extensively with fact than the Platonic dialogue, aimed at determining the best form of government. Theophrastus wrote a treatise περὶ τῆς ἀρίστης πολιτείας. Cicero himself describes his Dialogue *de Republicâ* as an enquiry "de optimo reipublicæ statu." The imaginary commonwealths, and political romances, which were a favourite mode of composition in the 16th, the 17th, and even in the 18th century, all professed to discover the perfect state:* and finally Mr. James Mill, in his article on Government, in the 'Ency-

* An enumeration and full account of the works of this class is given in the comprehensive Treatise of Professor Mohl, *Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften* (Erlangen, 1855), vol. i. pp. 167–214.

clopædia Britannica,' undertook to demonstrate, by an abstract and universal argument, that democracy is the best form of government.

Writings of this class have of late years become rare, and in fact have nearly disappeared. Their discontinuance has been owing to a prevalent conviction of their inutility. It has been thought (in the words of Lord Bacon) that the philosophical schemes of ideal commonwealths "are as the stars, which give little light, because they are so high."* Yet forms of government have not ceased to be important: they still exercise an extensive influence upon the happiness of nations; not only do they affect the interests, but they arouse the passions of mankind, and enlist large bodies of fanatical partizans under their respective banners.

It has therefore seemed to me that a compact statement of the principal arguments for and against each form of government would be suited to the wants of readers of the present generation. As the best mode of accomplishing this object, I have selected the dialogue form, which affords facilities for bringing on the stage the advocates of conflicting opinions, without any attempt at a decision, or at leading the reader to a dogmatic result.

When, after the researches of a long series of

* *Advancement of Learning*, b. 2, c. 23, § 44.

philosophers, a science has reached a fixed and established position, the dialogue would be a form wholly unsuited to its treatment. No scientific writer would now think of exhibiting the elements of astronomy, or of mechanics, or of chemistry, in the shape of a controversy between different interlocutors. But when philosophy was still making its first efforts for the discovery of truth, Plato embodied all his speculations in the form of dialogues; and this mode of composition always remained a favourite one among the ancients, even when the reasons for its use had been greatly weakened. Cicero composed nearly all his philosophical works in the dialogue form, and Tacitus used it for his discourse on the causes of the decay of eloquence. Modern writers have shown less fondness for this mode of treating a subject; but Berkeley thought that the state of metaphysical science in his time afforded a fit opening for his dialogue of the Minute Philosopher. Fontenelle employed the same method for investigating the question of the Plurality of Worlds; and a distinguished writer of our own time has fitly treated this indeterminate problem in the same form. Southey and other more recent authors have likewise used the dialogue as a vehicle for promulgating miscellaneous opinions on political and social subjects.

The philosophical dialogue possesses peculiar

advantages for presenting, distinctly, and in a small compass, the opposite arguments on an unsettled question. It is neither a debate nor a conversation. It has not the long speeches of the one, or the incoherent, rambling, and extemporaneous character of the other. It enjoys the benefit of the dramatic style, and it enables conflicting arguments to be put forward with an appearance of conviction on each side.

I have supposed the dialogue to take place in our own time and country, between four Englishmen, belonging to the educated class. My object has been to conceive each of the three recognized forms, Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy, as represented by a sincere partizan, and to attribute to him such arguments as a judicious advocate might properly use. I have attempted, in succession, to place each government in the light in which it would be regarded by an enthusiastic admirer, and to suggest all the strongest objections to the other governments which the advocates of each would naturally urge. My aim has been to conduct the controversy in such a manner as to represent the strength of each case; but I have not endeavoured to exhaust the subject. A dialogue is not fitted for systematic instruction, or for strict scientific treatment.

After this explanation of the plan of the composition, it is scarcely necessary for me to say that

I do not identify myself with any one of the interlocutors, or indeed render myself responsible for any of the arguments used in the dialogue. I may remark, however, that I have not in any instance knowingly attributed to any of the interlocutors merely logical fallacies; fallacies which turn upon verbal or formal sophisms, and which are absolutely destitute of proving force. The arguments which I have put in their mouths seemed to me to be valid as far as they go; though they may be overborne by other more powerful arguments. It is a controversy consisting of a debtor and creditor account; the difficulty lies in striking the balance fairly. The weights in one scale may be less heavy than the weights in the other scale, but they are nevertheless weights. Such is the nature of nearly all moral and political problems. Where the discussion is conducted on both sides by competent disputants, there are almost always valid arguments in favour of each of two opposite opinions. The difficulty is to determine which of two sets of valid arguments preponderates.

London, December, 1862.

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ON THE

BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

PERSONS:

MONARCHICUS, ARISTOCRATICUS, DEMOCRATICUS, CRITO.

CRITO.

As you happen to have met to-day at my house, and as you are all ardent politicians, I must take the liberty of addressing to you a remark, which concerns you all three equally. I find much less difficulty in agreeing with any one of those opinions concerning government which you hold singly, and in which each differs from the others, than in agreeing with the fundamental postulate which you hold in common. I have heard you all successively, on different occasions, express strong opinions in favour of a certain form of government, and wish for wars, and revolutions, and foreign intervention, in short, for any measure, however violent, provided that it would have the effect of changing the actual form of government into that form which you prefer. Your opinions on this subject are absolute; you do not attempt, or condescend, to show that a particular form of govern-

ment is suited to the circumstances or wants of the particular people; that it is likely to guard against certain evils to which the community in question are liable, or to produce certain benefits of which they are destitute; you believe that it will operate like a charm; mechanically and infallibly. Now it seems to me that there is no part of legislative science on which general rules are so difficult to frame, or have so little value, as that which concerns the best form of government. I am aware that a long series of political speculators, from Plato to James Mill, have occupied themselves with the solution of this problem; but, if it had been soluble, their efforts would assuredly not have been so barren of useful results as they must be considered to have been. No scheme of a Perfect or Ideal State has worked its way into the general approbation of the civilized world. Even if we reject all reference to the standard of popular opinion, and order all the unlearned members of the great public jury to stand aside, we shall find no *consensus eruditorum* on the subject. You remember the verses which would not have been so often quoted, if a large part of the world did not agree in the sentiment which they contain:

> For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered, is best.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

It seems to me, Crito, that your objection, and the verses of Pope which you adopt, in fact

beg the question which you propose to put in issue. I, and our two friends now present, differing as to the political forms which we prefer, agree in thinking that a certain form of government offers the best prospect of ensuring the welfare of the community. We are aware that a constitution of government and legislation are in themselves dead things, and that laws only obtain vitality in their administration. But believing that the form of government determines both the substance of the laws and the mode in which they are administered, we think that none but a good form of government can be well administered, and that the best form of government will be the best administered.

CRITO.

I do not deny that the administrative or executive branch of the government is, to a certain extent, dependent on the constitutional forms, and on the laws which are administered. It is possible that in this, as in other cases, Pope may have sacrificed truth to epigrammatic point. But the doctrine against which I protest is that which you all three uphold, and act upon, when you seek each to introduce your favourite form of government. No matter how prosperous or contented a country may be, you are always uneasy, until you have cut its constitution according to your particular pattern. If a country be under an aristocratic or democratic regimen, you, Monarchicus, are eager to make the government monar-

chical. If the constitution of a country be either monarchical or democratic, you, Aristocraticus, wish to make it aristocratic. If a country be ruled either as a monarchy or as an aristocracy, you, Democraticus, are desirous of making the government democratical. You allow nothing for habit, nothing for association, nothing for historical recollections; you assume that a community of men can be moulded, like clay, under your hands; that they can be moved like pieces on a chess-board, or like soldiers at a review. You expect that your new constitution will work with the truth and regularity of a machine; that its movements can be calculated beforehand, and that it will infallibly produce the effects which you intend it to produce. If a community is thoroughly disorganized, no form of government, however cunningly devised, will obtain stability, will afford security to property and protection to persons. No political frame could have acquired permanence in France at the end of the last century. The saying of the French bookseller who, on being asked for a copy of the last constitution, said that he did not deal in periodical publications, illustrates the state of things which then existed.

DEMOCRATICUS.

No sane man will deny the influence of habit and association in politics, or will attempt to treat a community of living men as an insentient machine. I have no ambition to be another

Abbé Sièyes, or to produce a series of free constitutions from my pigeon holes, of different shapes and sizes. But I must be allowed to think that democracy is the best form of government, that a nation can never be well governed under any other form, and that a democratic people can alone become enlightened and independent in its judgments. I therefore wish, as far as I can, to favour the cause of democracy. I wish to preserve this form of government where it exists, and to introduce it wherever it does not exist.

CRITO.

You accused me of begging the question at issue, in assuming that a bad form of government could be well administered. I must be permitted to say in return that you beg a question, which I am not prepared to concede, when you speak of a "best form of government." I cannot admit that there is any one form of government, which is best for every community, under every variety of circumstances. Compare the useful arts. Can it be said that there is a best ship, a best gun, a best knife, a best spade, independently of all the various purposes to which these instruments can be applied? Why are we to suppose that one form of government is the best adapted for all communities, whatever their moral and intellectual state may be? There is in particular one important point of difference which the constructors of an ideally perfect State quietly pass over, as if it did

not affect the conditions of their problem. I mean the difference of race. Those who affirm that they can determine the best form of government hold that this form is equally the best for a cannibal community in the Feejee Islands, for a negro, or Caffre, or Hottentot tribe in Africa, for an Oriental nation, for an European country. They make no allowance for difference of circumstances. Their theorems are as general as a proposition in Euclid, or in one of the physical sciences. Those who prove, by *à priori* arguments, that democracy is the best form of government, teach that it is best for France, for Russia, for Turkey, for China, for Timbuctoo, and for Otaheite.

MONARCHICUS.

I am far indeed from thinking that democracy is the best form of government, but I hold that there *is* a best form of government. The world is now nearly unanimous in favour of monarchy; out of the entire number of independent political communities, probably ninety-nine hundredths, at least, are governed by monarchical institutions. The all but universal practice of mankind testifies in favour of monarchy. The number of States under an aristocratic or democratic government is, moreover, gradually diminishing. The wars of the French empire have left few remaining in Europe. There were none in Africa or Asia. I hope that those in America will not be of long duration. Brazil (the only prosperous and well-regulated

State in South America) is a monarchy; and the Spanish republics can hardly be said to have any regular form of government. They alternate between anarchy and the capricious rule of some ephemeral military dictator. The proportion of mankind governed by republican institutions is extremely small, and surely there is nothing paradoxical in supposing that small exception to disappear.

CRITO.

I must leave Aristocraticus and Democraticus to settle with you the question whether monarchy is the best form of government, and whether they are willing to allow my objection to be answered by its assumed universality. Even if we suppose that monarchy is suited to rude and barbarous countries, and is best fitted for them; if we concede that an African or even an Asiatic community can only be governed by a despotic regimen, we are not therefore entitled to infer that despotic monarchy is best fitted for a highly civilized nation. But I have another reason for maintaining that you are not authorized in assuming without proof that there is such a thing as a universally best form of government. Such an hypothesis seems to me inconsistent with one of the essential distinctions between the moral and the physical sciences. A characteristic mark of the moral sciences is that their phenomena are in general produced by a plurality of causes: a characteristic mark of the physical sciences is that their pheno-

mena in general involve unity of causation. It is on account of the latter peculiarity that inductive reasoning is so much easier, more direct, and less fallible in the physical than in the moral sciences. When we see the ground covered with snow, we know that the snow fell from the clouds. When we see ice, we know that the temperature has been at a certain degree of cold. But in the moral sciences, it rarely happens that there is only one possible cause; and when we see an effect, a plurality of causes may in general be assigned for it hypothetically, without involving any theoretical absurdity. We know that bad government may assume a great variety of forms: that many different causes may make a people miserable, poor, ignorant, discontented, and anarchical. For a similar reason it is probable that there may be different sorts and forms of good government, and that a people may be rendered happy, prosperous, contented, and orderly by different modes of rule, and by different systems of legislation.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I concede readily that there are different sorts of bad government, but I contend that there is only one sort of good government. Rectitude is one, but error is multiform.

ἐσθλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἁπλῶς, παντοδαπῶς δὲ κακοὶ,

according to the verse which Aristotle quotes in his 'Ethics.'

CRITO.

Truth is one, and falsehood is infinite; but I cannot admit that this dictum is equally applicable to conduct and practice. It is undoubtedly true that there are more wrong ways than right ways; but can it be said that there is only one right way? We know that persons travelling by different roads, and in different conveyances, all arrive in equal safety, and in about the same time, at their journey's end. There may be more forms of bad government than of good government, but it does not follow that there is only one form of good government. There are multitudes of forms of morbid action in the human body, but it cannot be said that there is only one set of physical conditions which is consistent with health.

MONARCHICUS.

You must forgive me, Crito, if I pay little attention to your *à priori* presumptions against the possibility of the existence of a best form of government. I meet your theoretical objections to the possibility of its existence by proving that it actually exists. I undertake to demonstrate that monarchy is the best form of government; and if I succeed, your ingenious argumentation that there cannot be a best form of government falls to the ground.

CRITO.

I am quite ready to listen to your proposed demonstration, but you will observe that you place

the very foundation of your argument upon a narrow and a dangerous issue. If you fail in convincing our friends Aristocraticus and Democraticus (who, like yourself, have got a panacea for the ills of society) that monarchy is the best form of government, you likewise fail in proving that the existence of a best form of government is possible. You resemble a person who should attempt to convince an Atheist of the truth of revealed religion, without first convincing him of the existence of a God. However, I will not be disputatious, or seek to prevent you from proving your thesis in any way in which you think it can be proved. Pray give us your pleading for monarchy.

MONARCHICUS.

I am so confident of the goodness of my cause that I am quite willing to stake the general proposition upon my proof of the pre-eminent advantages of monarchy.

In the first place, then, monarchy is an institution *juris gentium*. It may be said, in strictness, to be common to all nations. There is no nation which has not at some period been under a monarchical regimen. The great majority of nations always have been, and are now, governed as monarchies. Monarchy is the universal form of government in Africa and Asia; it is nearly universal in Europe, the exceptions being a few insignificant republics, such as Hamburg, Frankfort, and the small federation of Switzerland. In

America there is the federation of the United States, in which both the federal government and the States' governments are democratic. With regard to Mexico and the other Spanish States of America, their governments have been formed on the model of the United States; but their political condition is so disorganized that they can hardly be said to have any settled form of government. On the whole, unless you reckon each Swiss canton, and each state of the American Union, as a separate unit—which you are not entitled to do, if a state is an independent political community—you cannot enumerate half-a-dozen states, in the entire world, as being under an aristocratic or democratic government.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I shall have a word to say presently upon the grounds of your enumeration; but before I come to the meaning which you attach to the word *monarchy*, let me ask you why you omit all reference to antiquity? Surely you must see that your doctrine of the universality of monarchy is inapplicable to a period when all the civilized part of the world was under a republican government of some sort. It is difficult to say that the whole ancient world was monarchical at a time when nearly all the Greek states were republican, and when Rome and Carthage were republics.

MONARCHICUS.

All the Greek republics began by a kingly government. The ancient politicians and historians concur in treating the patriarchal rule of an hereditary king as the primitive form of dominion. Rome had her seven kings; and whatever may be the authenticity of their legendary story, the institution of an interrex, which existed at the period of contemporary annals, must be considered as proving the previous existence of a royal government in Rome. The envy of the citizens subsequently led to the division of power, and to the establishment of oligarchies and democracies, in these small communities; but in Greece their factions, their internal discords, their foreign wars, their mutual jealousies and incapacity of firm union, and their unwillingness to submit to military discipline and to military command, led to their ultimately becoming subject to the kingdom of Macedon, and to other kingdoms founded by Alexander's generals. Rome had more military ability than the Greek States; she organized a military system which enabled her to conquer many neighbouring countries, and to hold them in subjection; but her military successes were partly owing to her monarchical institution of a dictator, to which the senate and people had the good sense to submit at moments of difficulty, when the weakness inherent in all popular institutions would have been fatal to the state. Her military system, however, proved in the end inconsistent with the

permanence of her republican government; for the accumulation of conquered territories formed a mass too great for the Roman senate and the assembly of Roman citizens to wield; the large standing armies became dangerous to liberty, and the generals who led them involved the country in a series of civil wars which produced evils so intolerable that the people were glad to take refuge under the monarchical sway of Augustus. He, as Tacitus says, "Cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium recepit." The people, weary of the inevitable consequences of popular institutions in a state so vast as Rome had become, was glad to place itself under the tutelary protection of a monarchy. For several centuries all the Greek and Italian communities, which had formerly been governed as republics, were aggregated under the sceptre of the Roman emperors, and republican government ceased to exist in the world. For about the twelve first centuries of the Christian era, it is literally true that the entire world was under monarchical governments; such a government as an oligarchy or democracy did not exist.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I will not stop to examine your explanation of the alleged failure of free institutions in antiquity. I hope to give my version of the character of the ancient aristocracies before our conversation comes to an end. But I would ask Monarchicus whether he takes no note of the Italian and German re-

publics of the Middle Ages, as modifying his proposition respecting the universality of monarchy.

MONARCHICUS.

It is undoubtedly true that after the disintegration of the Roman Empire, by the successive invasions of the barbarous tribes, and the destruction of the ancient civilization, a number of city communities, resting to a great extent upon trading corporations or guilds, were formed in Italy and Germany, and were governed by republican institutions. But these mediæval commonwealths were torn by internal factions; they afforded no models of good government; with the exception of Venice, they acquired no stability; and they fell, one after another, under the dominion of native *signori*, resembling the Greek τύραννοι, who destroyed all their liberties, and reduced them to the form which they presented in the last century. Some few of these republics resisted the monarchical tendency, and lasted until the wars of the French Revolution, which extinguished all the remains of independent republican government in Europe, but set up some ephemeral republics, affiliated with the revolutionary government of France. When Napoleon had made himself master of France, with the full consent of the people, whose patience was exhausted by six years of revolutionary tyranny, he handed over these republics to be governed as dependent kingdoms by his brothers and generals. In this way the mutual

animosities of republics redound to the profit of monarchy. The intrinsic weakness and inherent vices of popular rule inevitably lead, sooner or later, to its extinction. Monarchies rarely become republics, but republics inevitably become monarchies. Monarchy is the residuary legatee of all republican states. One after another they perceive their political errors, abjure their heresy, and are received into the bosom of the true political church—the "Alleinselig machende Kirche."

DEMOCRATICUS.

I cannot sufficiently admire the boldness of your argument, Monarchicus. If we were not sitting quietly in our friend Crito's library, and if I did not know that you sincerely hold the opinions which you have enunciated, I should suppose that you were profiting by the dictum of Juvenal:

> Nam quum magna malæ superest audacia causæ,
> Creditur a multis fiducia.

MONARCHICUS.

Do not suppose that I have exhausted all my arguments in favour of monarchy. If I am confident, my confidence rests on solid grounds. But, before I proceed further, let me hear what you have to say against the inference to be drawn from the almost universal testimony of mankind in favour of monarchy. You make the preponderance of numbers the test of truth and the standard of practice; you decide all practical questions by

the voice of the majority. How comes it that you refuse to apply this test to the present question? The vast majority of mankind, whether you reckon them by heads or by states, has decided for monarchical against republican government. The republicans are numerically a miserable minority of the human race.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

As you have fairly defied Democraticus and myself to a trial of arms, I will accept your challenge, and begin the encounter. In the first place, then, I take exception to your use of the term monarchy, and to the number of governments which you include within its signification.

Your enumeration of monarchies is founded upon the popular fallacy, which assumes that every king is a monarch, and that every kingdom is a monarchy. Monarch is the name of a power, king is merely a title. You are not authorised to infer that, because the head of a state is called king, is of royal rank, and succeeds to his dignity by inheritance, therefore he possesses the entire sovereign power, that he is despot, *dominus*, or master of the state, and is a monarch in the proper sense of the word. Wherever there is a constitutional king—wherever the crown is associated with parliamentary assemblies, exercising a substantial power, there the king is not sovereign, and the government is not monarchical.

MONARCHICUS.

How then do you designate a government, such as that of England, with an hereditary king or queen at its head? It must surely have a name; and everybody calls it a monarchy.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I may be very audacious, but I consider it a republic. It may not be a democratic republic, but it is a republic, nevertheless. By a republic I understand every government in which the sovereign power is, both in form and in substance, distributed among a body of persons. Where the government is, both in fact and in form, or in fact simply, and not in form, exercised by one person, I consider the government monarchical.

MONARCHICUS.

Do not all writers agree in giving to the government of England, and to other similar governments, formed of a king and parliament, the appellation of "limited monarchies"?

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I am quite aware that usage is against me; but when usage is inaccurate, and suggests a false classification, it may be reformed. The ancients spoke of the seven planets, because they conceived the sun and moon, equally with the five erratic stars, as revolving round the immoveable and central earth. Since the establishment of the

Copernican system, we retain the term planets; but we restrict it to the five wandering stars, and no longer apply it to the sun—the immoveable centre of the system, or to the moon—the satellite of the earth. The phrase "limited monarchy," however, seems to me to admit of a rational explanation; and I do not object to it, provided its true meaning is recognized. Where, by a historical process, by gradual encroachments on the power of the crown, and by gradual enlargement of the functions of the Houses of Parliament, a line of kings, who once possessed the entire sovereignty, have ceased to be monarchs in the strict sense of the word, the government may be called "a limited monarchy;" that is to say, a monarchy, which, having once been unlimited, has since changed its character, and has acquired the attributes of a republic. *Still life,* as a term in painting, is analogous to *limited monarchy,* since it originally denoted *dead animals;* that is, animals which were alive, but are so no longer. In the Greek states the king was gradually stripped of his power, and he retained none of his former prerogatives, except that of performing certain sacrifices on behalf of the state. He became, in fact, a mere sacerdotal dignitary. The same change took place at Rome: after the expulsion of the Tarquins, the royal office survived only in the king of the sacrifices. In these states the royal power was so completely obliterated, that they could not with propriety be called

limited monarchies; the monarchical element of government was not limited—it was destroyed. At Sparta the power of the kings was restricted; it was exercised in concert with that of the elective magistrates, and the general assembly of citizens; and if there had been one line of hereditary kings, instead of two, the government of Sparta would have probably been called a limited monarchy; but, as there were two parallel lines of kings, the term monarchy has been considered inapplicable, and it has been called a republic. Aristotle and Polybius, however, in treating of mixed governments, consider the monarchical element as present in the constitution of Sparta, on account of its kings.

MONARCHICUS.

The powers of a constitutional king may not be unlimited, like those of a monarch in an Oriental state; but he has many attributes in common with absolute monarchs. The head of a republic, such as the Doge of Venice, or the President of the United States, is subject to the laws; but a constitutional king is, like the Roman Emperor, *solutus legibus;* he is above the laws, not under them; according to the law of England, the "king can do no wrong;" that is to say, he can commit no breach of the law, civil or criminal; he is legally irresponsible. If the king of England were to commit an act, which in a subject would be a breach of the criminal law, he could not be put

upon his trial; he could not be indicted in one of his own courts. In like manner, he cannot be made the defendant in a civil action, and be sued for a civil injury.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

All this is very true, but it does not meet my argument. With a single exception, the rules which you cite have merely an antiquarian interest, and are devoid of practical importance. They are relics of a time when the kings of England were, or claimed to be, monarchs in the strict sense of the word. The exemption of the king of England from the jurisdiction of the criminal courts has no influence upon his conduct. The foreign ambassadors and ministers resident in England are likewise exempt from the jurisdiction of our criminal courts; but, although they are liable to the jurisdiction of their own courts, in the event of their committing a crime in this country, nobody supposes that this liability is the true reason why they abstain from the commission of crime. It is true that the king of England cannot formally be sued in a civil action; but that which cannot be done directly, can be done indirectly. The would-be suitor addresses a petition to the Crown to do him justice. This petition, which is called a Petition of Right, is, by custom, treated legally; it is referred to the Attorney-General; and if the claim is a *bonâ fide* one, the permission that *right be done* is granted by the

Crown as of course. The claim then becomes the subject of ordinary litigation. The only substantial and operative part of the rule that the *king can do no wrong* is that which makes him politically irresponsible. This rule, as our ancestors saw clearly, is the necessary corollary of ministerial responsibility. Responsibility cannot be dissociated from power, in a free government. If you hold that the king is responsible, you cannot hold that his ministers are responsible. They become his agents; he has the power to order; they are bound to obey, and he covers them with his responsibility. It is impossible that the political responsibility of ministers can be practically enforced, unless the king is held to be politically irresponsible. Instead, therefore, of considering the maxim that *the king can do no wrong*, in its political acceptation, as a mark of an absolute monarchy, I regard it as the very keystone of the constitutional or parliamentary system.

MONARCHICUS.

There is another point in which all kings, whether absolute or not, agree. They regard themselves as forming a single caste or order: they intermarry only with one another: they have certain modes of address, and a certain ceremonial, in which they all participate, whatever their power may be. The king of England, and the king of the Belgians, who are associated with a parliament, are admitted to be of equal rank and

dignity with kings who are not associated with a parliament. Their sons and daughters are called princes and princesses, and they intermarry exclusively with one another.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The custom to which you allude illustrates, what I previously pointed out, as the characteristic of this class of so-called monarchies. *King* is a title; it denotes a certain social rank, accompanied with certain legal precedence, and with the consequences of that precedence; but it does not designate any fixed amount of political power. Everybody must see that the head of a state may possess the entire sovereign power, or only a portion of the sovereign power. This is the circumstance which determines the form of government. But, if he bears the title of king, and acquires his dignity by inheritance, he may be treated on an equality by other hereditary kings, as to social rank, and its privileges, although they may possess the entire sovereign power, and he may not.

No idea is more familiar to us than the difference of political power associated with the same title of office. In travelling through different countries, we meet with officers bearing the same title of office, but armed with different powers. Nobody, again, supposes that a modern consul of trade possesses the same powers as a Roman consul. When we come to extreme cases of this kind, the illustration is scarcely serious.

One is reminded of the English traveller in Germany, before the French Revolution, who described himself as "Elector of Westminster" on his passport. He left it to be inferred that, in proportion as Westminster was a greater city than Cologne or Treves, so an Elector of Westminster was a greater personage than an Elector of Cologne or Treves.

MONARCHICUS.

Notwithstanding your distinctions, I must persist in claiming the benefit of the received phraseology, which refers all monarchies, absolute and constitutional, to the same class, and opposes them jointly to republics. I am sure that I shall be supported by Democraticus in this claim, for all republicans agree in proscribing kings in a body: they make no exception for constitutional kings. When the French Jacobin prayed to "étrangler le dernier roi dans le boyau du dernier prêtre," he expressed the maxim of the republicans of his day. I am quite willing to decide our controversy by the language and conduct of republicans. If it was merely their language, I should attach less weight to it; but their convictions and feelings evidently go with their words. They hate a constitutional king as much as they hate an absolute king. When the Americans resent a combination of the crowned heads of Europe, they include England, Belgium, and Italy, not less than France and Austria. I claim

nothing but what the republicans concede to me *They* do not classify constitutional monarchies with republics, or recognize any affinity between the two forms of government. I maintain that by the acknowledgment of the republicans themselves, I am entitled to reckon all limited monarchies as monarchies—and if this point is established, it follows that there are only two republics in the world, namely, the United States and Switzerland, besides Hamburg, Frankfort, and any other of the free towns of Europe, which may by accident have retained a nominal independence. This is a far closer approach to a *consensus* of all mankind, than can be found on any other subject of government, religion, ethics, or even of the useful arts; and I repeat, that it affords a powerful argument in favour of the pre-eminent excellence of monarchy.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

"I must protest against being bound by the argumentative consequences of a phraseology, which, although generally received, I hold to be erroneous. The utmost to which you can drive me by this mode of reasoning is, to compel me to adapt my use of terms more closely to the common usage. The most convenient use of terms seems to me to divide governments into monarchies and republics,—by a monarchy understanding a government in which one person is practically sovereign; and by a republic under-

standing a government in which the sovereignty is divided among a body of persons. If this body of persons is small, the state is an aristocratic republic; if the number is large, the state is a democratic republic. This is the classification which I consider as most correct and most commodious, and which can be most easily handled in political reasoning. But if you disallow it, and persist in adhering more closely to the popular usage, then I would propose to make two classes of monarchies, namely,—first, pure, absolute, or unlimited monarchies, or monarchies properly so called; and, secondly, limited, mixed, or constitutional monarchies, or monarchies improperly so called: that is, kingly governments in which the king is not sovereign. Consistently with this classification, I would define a republic as a state in which several persons share the sovereign power, with this qualification, that the person at the head of the state does not bear the title of king, is not of royal rank, and does not succeed to his office by an hereditary title. I consider this, however, merely a verbal division, made in deference to a capricious and fanciful usage. I regard the second class of monarchies as properly belonging to the class of republics, and I hold that, for all purposes of general reasoning, it ought to be deemed to be included in that class. The concession which I make to you is, therefore, nominal. I do not admit that all the states which you call monarchical are mon-

archies in the proper sense of the word, or that the United States and Switzerland are the only two important countries in the world in which the government is substantially republican. I consider the essence of republican government to be that the sovereignty is divided among a body of persons, and that characteristic is to be found in a limited monarchy.

MONARCHICUS.

Even if I were to admit the justice of your reasoning, and to transfer your second species of monarchies to the class of republics, my argument would not be materially weakened. The number of limited monarchies is inconsiderable. Few states have been able to work the system of an hereditary king, really controlled by a free parliament. Supposing I were to reform the two sides of our account, by giving you credit for all limited monarchies, the balance would still be enormously in my favour. It would remain an unquestionable fact that the preponderating voice of mankind, in all ages, has been decisively given in favour of monarchy.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The principle of government for which I contend, and which I regard as vital and fundamental, is plurality of persons, as opposed to unity, for the possession of the sovereign power. I consider the recognition of this principle as the

first step in the road of good government; without it, no security for good government can exist. The purely monarchical principle, the concentration of all the sovereign power in the hands of one person, seems to me the mark of a rude and unimproved system. Hence the ancient politicians treat it as the primitive form of government. They say that when human societies were first formed, and mankind emerged from their original barbarism, they were governed by a single chief, under a monarchical form. Monarchy, in the form of chieftainship,—the absolute rule of a military patriarch,—has been, and still is, common to all savage tribes. It is the government of the negroes of Africa; of the savages of the Pacific; of the red men of America, so far as they have any government. The rudeness of this portion of mankind is such, that they have neither priests, lawyers, nor physicians. The medicine-man is armed with formidable privileges; but the occult powers which he invokes are magical, rather than religious. The African negroes have not arrived at the idea of dividing a dwelling into separate rooms. If they want a second room, they build a second hut. They have no writing, no traditional history, and not even any traditional poetry. Altogether the intellectual and social state of the native Africans, and of other savage tribes, is such, that no argument can be drawn from their practice in favour of the use of monarchy by civilized nations.

I admit, likewise, that from the dawn of history, down to the present day, the Oriental states have, with insignificant exceptions, been governed by a monarchical regimen. Even the Tyrians, though they were a commercial people, and seem to have had a class of wealthy merchants, were ruled by absolute kings. Their colony, Carthage, whose aristocratic constitution is thought by Aristotle worthy of a detailed description in his 'Politics,' imitated its form of government from the neighbouring Greek communities of Sicily, not from its own mother country. The monarchy of the Oriental States is indeed an improved and refined machinery, compared with that of the black African races. It is founded on the satrapical system, and by this mode of delegating and distributing power, is able to govern large empires. Satraps often assert their independence, and the Oriental system of provincial government is seldom of long duration; but so long as an Oriental empire retains its cohesion, so long as the provincial governors are kept in dependence, are compelled to pay their tribute, and to furnish their quota of troops for the common defence of the country, a degree of skill and intelligence is implied in the successful working of the system which is far above the mental capacity of an African negro. Such an empire as those of Assyria and Persia in antiquity, or of China, the dominions of the Great Mogul, and of the Ottoman Porte in modern times, never has

existed, and probably never will exist, among the natives of Africa. On the other hand, the Orientals are as inferior to the Europeans as they are superior to the Africans. They have never produced any scientific or literary works worthy of mention, except the 'Arabian Nights': their domestic and social life is founded upon polygamy; they have contributed nothing to the progress and improvement of mankind, beyond the interval between the savage state and their own rude civilization. All that the West owes to the invention of the East is alphabetic writing and the Arabic numerals. There is nothing to make it probable that they will ever hereafter advance beyond the condition in which they have remained stationary since the days of Darius and Xerxes. One of the component parts of their hereditary barbarism is, in my opinion, their despotic monarchy. Their entire political system is constructed on the same principle as our military and naval systems. The sovereign delegates his power to a succession of individual officers; there is no collegiate or corporate action at any stage of this hierarchy. This simple and primitive machinery may possess certain advantages when applied to a community in the low intellectual and moral state of an Oriental nation, and may, on that account, be nearly universal in Asia; but I cannot admit that its prevalence in that quarter of the globe raises any presumption in its favour, when its applicability to the

more intelligent and refined Europeans is in question.

MONARCHICUS.

I think you must acknowledge that, if the African and Asiatic nations are to be governed at all, they must, so long as they retain their present nature, or, at any rate, so long as they remain in their present state of intelligence and morality, be governed monarchically. They would be incapable of comprehending, or of using, the refinements and niceties of a republican government. But I maintain that the simplicity, which you improperly call the rudeness, of monarchy, not only renders it indispensable to the African and Asiatic nations, but renders it advantageous to the European nations. Africa and Asia must use it, because they have no alternative: Europe ought to use it, because, although she has an alternative, that alternative is a bad one. A machine may be so complex and so intricate as to be troublesome to those who are capable of learning the rules of its management, and it may therefore be wisely discarded.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

This is exactly the point in which I differ from you. I hold that the abolition of monarchy and the introduction of plural, or republican government, which had its origin in Greece, was both a proof of the high intelligence of the Greeks, and a powerful auxiliary in the subsequent advancement

of their civilization. It was at first an effect, and afterwards became a conspiring cause, of their superiority to the Asiatic nations, to the nations which they designated as *barbarian*. The Greeks were the inventors of corporate government, of the system of dividing the sovereign power among a number of co-ordinate persons, whose combined assent was necessary to an act of the supreme authority. For this assent of the sovereign body unanimity was not requisite: it could be given by the majority. This system was invented by the Greeks, as much as the pendulum clock was invented by Huyghens, or the steam-engine by Watt. When it was introduced by them, the world had known nothing but monarchy. It is the essence of a free government: without the distribution of the sovereign power among a body, free government cannot exist. This important principle in the art of government the Greeks conceived clearly, and after a time they applied it universally in their small city communities. The office of the ancient hereditary king was either abolished, or converted into a sacerdotal dignity; any individual, who, by cajoling or intimidating the people, was able to make himself a *tyrant*, or despot, was regarded as an usurper, and his rule rested on force. The Greeks detested the usurped and illegitimate government of one man, but their application of the principle of corporate government was unskilful. They either divided the entire sovereignty among a few men, determined

by birth or wealth, or they divided it among the entire free body of citizens. The former government was called an oligarchy or aristocracy, the latter a democracy. There was no contrivance for delegating the sovereign power, as in the modern system of Political Representation. In an oligarchy, the oligarchs were independent of popular election; in a democracy, the entire people exercised their sovereign rights directly, and without appointing any representatives to act for them. This unskilful application of an invaluable principle produced two ill results in the republics of antiquity, one with respect to their internal, the other with respect to their external relations. As to their internal relations, the ruling body in an oligarchy was too independent of the people, while the ruling body in a democracy was too numerous for intelligent government, and was liable to be stimulated to passionate decisions by eloquent demagogues. As to their external relations, they were unable to incorporate conquered territory into their own system of government, upon fair and equal terms. A newly acquired province became a dependency, under the ruling body of citizens in the sovereign state. Nevertheless, with all their defects, the free governments of Greece and Italy produced all that was precious in antiquity—their literature, their art, their science, their history. It was through them that the foundations of our modern European civilization were laid. They were a necessary

condition for the existence of a state of society and education which could not grow up under the Oriental system of monarchy; the most improved method of government which the Greeks found in being.

MONARCHICUS.

I cannot allow you to continue your eulogies of the corporate system of government any longer without protesting against the principle on which it rests. There can be no corporate government without decision by a majority; this principle is equally involved in oligarchical and democratic government. Now decision by a majority is unquestionably one of the clumsiest contrivances for securing rectitude of decision which can be devised. You may talk of the rudeness of monarchical government, but I defy you to point out anything in monarchy so irrational as counting votes, instead of weighing them; as making a decision depend, not on the knowledge, ability, experience, and fitness of the judges, but upon their number. Nobody, in forming his individual opinion, ever resorts to such a test. No historian, in commenting on the vote of an assembly, ever says, that the decision was made by the majority, and therefore it was right.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

Decision by a majority may be open to theoretical objections, but, on the whole, it works well

in practice, and it is necessary for securing the enormous benefit of corporate government; without it corporate government is impossible, and we must resign ourselves to pure and unqualified monarchy. There are two main defects in the system of absolute monarchy, which are inseparable from it as a general system, and from which corporate government is exempt. The first of these is, that the entire sovereign power is borne by one man. His single life therefore has a peculiar importance. If he is assassinated, the throne is suddenly rendered vacant, and a fortunate pretender may step into it. All history is full of attempts on the lives of absolute monarchs, some successful, others unsuccessful. Hence an absolute monarch becomes timid, suspicious, and full of jealous precautions. Cicero, in his Tusculan Disputations, gives a long and curious account of the contrivances to which Dionysius resorted, in order to preserve his life; contrivances, which included his friends, and even his wife and daughters; and we know that after the pamphlet of 'Killing no Murder,' Cromwell is supposed to have worn armour. Now fear, above all things, renders a man cruel; and it is this distrust of persons near the throne which has filled Oriental palaces with murders, and has dictated the sanguinary measures of Asiatic princes directed against their successors, and other members of their family.

MONARCHICUS.

In human affairs you cannot have unmixed good, and the undeniable advantages of unity in government—the rapidity, the consistency, the firmness—cannot be obtained without some drawbacks. But when you speak of the cruelty of absolute princes, I must remind you that this is no peculiarity of monarchy. Some of the Greek oligarchies were marked by the same vice: the Spartans assassinated their helots, and Aristotle tells us that in some oligarchies they took a public oath "to hate the people, and to do them all possible harm." The massacres of the ancient democracies are well known; in the Italian republics of the middle age they were repeated, and the French revolution of 1789 shows that democracy has not lost its sanguinary character, even in modern times.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I am not going to extenuate the atrocities which have at certain times been committed both by aristocratic and democratic governments; but I think I can show, when I come to my second point, that an absolute monarch is far more likely to be cruel than the sovereign body in an aristocracy or a democracy. The second capital defect which I find in monarchy is that the exercise of the supreme power is influenced by the feelings, passions, interests, and motives which belong to a single man;

whereas, in a corporate sovereignty, the exercise of the supreme power can only be influenced by those feelings, passions, interests, and motives which belong to several persons in common. By excluding all motives which are peculiar to an individual, and which cannot be shared by several persons, you exclude some of the most pernicious and antisocial motives—some of the motives which are most dangerous in a ruler. Thus, to begin with the quality of which we were just speaking, a body of persons are rarely exposed to the fear of assassination. Massacres on a large scale are not easy of accomplishment. Even the mad Caligula wished that the Roman people had only one throat. He felt the difficulty of cutting a multitude of throats. Guy Faux's plot was the contrivance of a set of desperadoes, and it never reached the point of execution. Now, as a body of rulers are rarely in fear of their lives, their policy is not tainted with the consequences of fear. Hence they are exempt from that motive which is the main cause of the cruelty of absolute monarchs. A similar remark applies to the other active passions, such as anger, lust, jealousy, vindictiveness. These passions are essentially personal, and cannot in general be shared simultaneously by several men. It is a prevailing doctrine of popular historians, that kings and other monarchs have worse natures than other men; that they are more wicked and more malignant than their inferiors in rank; and that this depravity is due to the defective educa-

tion and the corrupting temptations of their exalted station. Now I am not disposed to weaken a cause so good as mine, either by exaggeration or by availing myself of popular prejudices. I am not going to rake arguments against monarchy out of the gutter of Jacobin pamphlets. I shall not draw a single fact from the learning of the 'Crimes des Rois.' I am willing to admit that monarchs, as a class, have not, by nature, been worse than other men. If imperial or royal rank has its drawbacks, it has also its advantages. It may, in youth, remove or weaken the motives for laborious study; it may expose a person to many social temptations; it may make him proud and contemptuous; and may cut him off from sympathy with the rest of the world. On the other hand it gives him the opportunity of cultivating any humane or elevated tastes which he may possess; it imparts refinement and polish to his manners; it brings him into contact with numerous persons, and, in a modern state at least, makes him acquainted with their wishes and interests. Unless his nature is thoroughly hardened, and he is entirely devoid of conscience, his conspicuous position infuses in him an increased sense of responsibility, and a regard for popular opinion, which in a private station he would be without. I do not therefore maintain that monarchs, as a class, are naturally bad; but I maintain that the undivided possession of sovereignty is a temptation which scarcely any ordinary man can resist; and I

believe that an ordinary member of a legislative body, who enjoys a fair reputation in his private position, would yield to those temptations, and would behave as ordinary monarchs have behaved. Now the defects which I have mentioned are not accidental; they are inherent in monarchy, and belong to its very essence; they are inseparable from it, in every variety of its developments—in barbarous and civilized, in African, Asiatic, or European nations. They belong to monarchy, as being the government of one; and therefore they are completely cured by dividing the government among several persons, and by changing it from the singular to the plural form.

MONARCHICUS.

The singleness of power may have some disadvantages, but it is the characteristic excellence of the monarchical form. A monarch may be ill-disposed or foolish; but whenever he possesses virtue or wisdom, and to whatever extent he possesses these qualities, he can exercise them; he is not restrained by the necessity of securing the assent of a majority. Now in a legislative body the virtuous and the wise are always in a minority, and their movements are impeded and restrained by the necessity of obtaining the votes of the majority. A monarchy *may* be, but a republic *must* be, unwisely governed.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

In order to give a complete answer to your argument, I must make a comparison between the free governments of ancient and modern times.

The Greeks invented corporate government, based upon the decision of the majority. They confined the governing power to a minority of the entire community. The majority were slaves. Now it is important to remark that the Greeks did not invent slavery; they invented freedom. In Persia and Egypt the whole community were slaves. Every man might at any time be compelled to work for the government; but in a Greek republic there was a privileged class of citizens who were exempt from the obligation to forced labour, and were themselves slave-masters. This privileged class established among themselves a corporate or republican government, which, whether oligarchical or democratical, excluded the slave-class, the most numerous part of the community. In a modern European state the whole community is free; and where parliamentary government exists, the electoral body, including a considerable portion of the population, appoints representatives who exercise a large part of the sovereign power. These persons must have sufficient intelligence and knowledge to appear in public as candidates, and to stand the ordeal of a popular election. They are chosen by the votes of a constituent body; and they may be presumed to possess a greater aptitude for legislative functions

than an equal number of persons taken indiscriminately from the public, like the legislative body in an ancient commonwealth. A considerable portion of the members of a parliament devote themselves to legislative business, and acquire a sort of professional acquaintance with the subject. The whole chamber ranges itself under different leaders, generally selected on account of their capacity, by whose advice their followers are to a considerable extent guided. In many other ways (as by the appointment of select committees) the crude numerical principle of decision by a majority is tempered by the principle of special fitness and appropriate knowledge.

MONARCHICUS.

A modern parliament is no doubt a better engine for government than an assembly of Athenian or Florentine citizens meeting in the open air, and listening to the inflammatory harangue of a party leader; but even under your improved modern system a legislative assembly is divided into political parties, and the government is dependent upon their rivalries and jealousies, and their comparative strength. In this manner the sovereign power is swayed by contending passions, from which the monarch, placed in a serene atmosphere above the region of storms, is altogether exempt.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The existence of political parties may be a great evil in a state, when their mutual animosity is such as to lead them to violent conflict with each other, and to be inconsistent with their acting together in one political system. When political parties are so hostile and so embittered, as the followers of the rival chiefs were in the latter part of the Roman republic, or the Guelfs and Ghibellines were in the Italian republics of the Middle Ages, or the Royalists and Jacobins under the French Revolution, they may be irreconcilable with popular government, and a despotic dictator may be the least bad alternative. Such, according to Lucan's description, was the state of the Romans during the civil wars:—

"Non erat is populus, quem pax tranquilla juvaret,
Quem sua libertas immotis pasceret armis."

But this is not the necessary or ordinary state of things in a well-organized free community. In such a community the political parties are not animated by feelings of deadly hatred against each other. They are divided by opinion and interest, and are willing to decide their differences by combat on a constitutional ground. One party may be attached to existing institutions or to the existing government; another may wish for some political innovation, of greater or less extent. It is wholesome that such parties should exist: they prevent political stagnation; they create political

discussion; they promote political progress. It is mainly by the existence of parties powerful enough to secure attention to the interests and arguments of a minority that political improvement is accomplished. Entire unanimity on political questions is in general an evil; political discord, up to a certain point, is an advantage to a state. All received opinions on political subjects cannot be right; all existing laws cannot be wise and expedient. On the other hand, dissidents from established doctrines and institutions may be tolerated, and, when they are in the wrong, their errors may be forgiven. Even unity in matters of religion is, for civil purposes, disadvantageous. The existence of various sects is a guarantee for religious liberty, and a protection against religious tyranny and persecution. Nothing, in a political and intellectual point of view, would at present be more beneficial to Italy and Spain than the formation of religious sects, strong enough to resist the dominant Church. If Charles V., Philip II., and Louis XIV. had understood the true interest and duty of a civil ruler, they would, instead of extinguishing religious dissent by force, rather have thrown, like Cadmus, a stone into the midst of the conflicting parties.

MONARCHICUS.

We belong to a country in which constitutional ideas have long been paramount, in which the rights of a minority are respected, and in which

dominant majorities are accustomed to abstain from the extreme use of their superior power. It is, therefore, easy for one of us to insist upon the advantages of political party. But ask a Frenchman whether he does not fear the excesses of faction under a free government; whether he expects that the rights of a majority would in his country be exercised with forbearance and moderation; and whether he looks forward to the government of France reaping any benefit from what you regard as the blessings of political discord. Whatever you may allege as to the drawbacks of monarchy, you must admit that, in general, an immunity from factious conflicts is a great benefit to a state.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I cannot admit that monarchical states are altogether exempt from political parties. Political parties often exist in a monarchy; but the monarch exerts himself to crush their aristocratic leaders, because they alone have sufficient strength and courage to oppose his acts. His aim is to reduce the entire community to the same dead level: to imitate the ancient policy of cutting off the heads of the tallest poppies. Louis XIV., the great organizer of continental despotism, acted steadily upon this principle. He used, and used with effect, various refined contrivances for weakening and lowering the heads of the old French noblesse. He was particularly

solicitous of depressing the hereditary nobility and the men of ancient families. Charles V. had previously used his great power for weakening and lowering the noble families of Spain, which never recovered from the benumbing influence of his reign and that of his successor, Philip II. At the present time a Russian noble, however large his possessions, owes his position in the state exclusively to military rank, which he must obtain from the personal gift of the Emperor. Hereditary nobility, though the object of so much blind hostility from the champions of democracy, has flourished most in free states, and dwindles away under a pure and rigid monarchy. In an Oriental state there are no great families, bearing hereditary titles, or names distinguished by hereditary honours. As soon as a man emerges from the crowd, he becomes the subject of plunder or of jealous proscription, unless he is engrafted into the system of government as a satrap. Even under the English government of India, the jealousy felt by a foreign class of rulers would prevent the formation of powerful hereditary native families. It was in the Greek republics that hereditary families (such as the family of Callias at Athens), distinguished by wealth and political power through several generations, appeared for the first time. Aristotle wrote a treatise on 'Nobility,' in which he discussed its proper definition. An Oriental, even if he had been capable of composing an argumen-

tative treatise, could not have written such a work; for the thing did not exist within the sphere of his experience. The importance of the patrician families at Rome, and the large share which they bore in its political and military successes, are well known. As soon as the republic was extinguished, and the Roman government became despotic, the great patrician families disappeared from the stage; they lost their independence, the senate was converted into a body of subservient sycophants, and the high places of the state, once held by the Æmilii and the Curii, were occupied by freedmen. The chief opponents of Philip II. in the Netherlands, and the chief supporters of the national and popular cause against Spanish tyranny, were the heads of the old nobility. In our own country, the aristocratic leaders of the Whig party, during the last century, stood up against the power of the Crown, and by their independent position were able to give efficient support to the popular cause. If George III. had been as powerful as Louis XIV., he would have reduced the leaders of the Whig party to insignificance, and have extinguished the party itself. The enmity which despots show to political parties and to an hereditary nobility, and the motives on which that enmity is founded, prove, to my mind, that both political parties, and an hereditary nobility, are advantageous to a state.

MONARCHICUS.

I do not wish to pursue the argument against political parties any further; for I am confident that their excesses are viewed with alarm in all countries which enjoy the benefit of a monarchical regimen. But with respect to the advantages of hereditary nobility, I have Democraticus on my side. He is more intolerant of hereditary rank than I am. Burke has affirmed, in his speech on Economical Reform, that kings are naturally lovers of low company, and that court offices with large salaries are expedient, on the ground that through their influence the king is surrounded by men of high rank, and is thus prevented from gratifying his taste for flatterers, parasites, and buffoons. I cannot admit that this doctrine as to the prevailing tastes of kings is consistent with fact. They seem to me to have been generally inclined to favour hereditary rank, and to choose their courtiers among persons of noble birth. But, at all events, the democratic party is more opposed than monarchs to hereditary rank, and to the power of the nobility. The French Jacobins guillotined the nobles with as much satisfaction as they guillotined the king. If monarchs have discouraged the pretensions of aristocrats, the democrats have cut off their heads, or driven them into exile. Assuming your proposition to be true, hereditary aristocracy is discouraged in two out of the three forms of government.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I am now arguing against monarchy, and I am not responsible for what I consider as the errors of democratic doctrine. Hostility to the intellectual eminence, to the personal independence, and to the honest pride, which ought to characterize every aristocracy, is a natural attribute of an absolute monarchy; and it may accordingly be discerned among the various bad qualities of the old French government. The monarchy of France, from Louis XIV. down to 1789, prevented the formation of a good aristocracy. It maintained the nobles in the possession of their civil privileges; and, at the same time, deprived them of political power. It preserved their exemption from direct taxes, and kept up the barriers between them and the *tiers état;* it thus rendered them odious to the rest of the community. It hardened the mass of the people by its habitual severity, by its cruel punishments, and by its system of judicial torture, which were continued until the Revolution. The frightful punishment of Damiens was in 1757; the breaking of Calas upon the wheel took place in 1762; the horrible execution of the young Chevalier de la Barre occurred in 1766. The men who, in July 1789, soon after the taking of the Bastille, murdered Foulon and his son-in-law Berthier, in the streets of Paris; who hung them from lamp-posts, cut off their heads, and carried them on pikes, thrust Foulon's head in his son-in-law's face, tore out

their hearts and entrails, and even devoured them from savage joy—these men had acquired their ferocity under the teaching of the old monarchy; they had not learnt it in the school of Robespierre and Marat. Moreover, the old French monarchy, by its frequent recourse to *coups d'état*, trained the people to a systematic disregard of fixed constitutional and legal rules. By this mode of government, it prepared the way for the Revolution of 1789, and for Bonaparte, the two great scourges of modern Europe. The generation of Frenchmen which had grown up to manhood in the year 1789, was the creation of the old monarchy, not of the Revolution. The Revolution was made by men whose characters and opinions had been formed under the monarchy, and who owed to it their training. If the French nobles had not been, by the short-sighted and selfish jealousy of the monarchy, withdrawn from all political life, and from all the realities of business, they would not have shown the feebleness, the mutual mistrust, and the incapacity to combine, which characterized them, as a class, during the storms of the early part of the Revolution. Instead of emigrating, they would have organized a resistance to the Convention; and, acting in a body, they would easily have put down the handful of ruffians who worked the Paris guillotine during the Reign of Terror. Several modern writers have, indeed, attempted to exhibit the French Revolution in a favourable aspect. This paradox

would have had no chance of success with the contemporary generation; it has only gained acceptance with those who knew the Revolution from books, and profited by the equalizing laws to which it had given birth. After all, however, it has produced only a skin-deep conviction; it has not reached the hearts and beliefs of Frenchmen. Nothing would excite greater alarm or repugnance in France than a serious attempt to revive the political system of that period.

MONARCHICUS.

The old French monarchy may have had its faults, but you cannot make it responsible for the crimes and horrors of the Revolution of 1789. All impartial writers, whether native or foreign, have concurred in regarding the philosophers of the eighteenth century—Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and their associates—as the true authors of the Revolution. It was their infidel and democratic writings which undermined the throne and the altar, and depraved the minds of the French people. When the soil had been tilled by such hands, it was natural that a harvest of blood and anarchy should be reaped. Burke's is the correct view of the French Revolution. It was the attempt to start afresh, to cut off all connexion with the past, to destroy the old government, and to create a new government on its ruins, which produced the miseries of that calamitous period. Burke had the sagacity to discern the conse-

quences of this system, at a time when the majority of his countrymen were rejoicing at the revolutionary changes in France.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

It is a great misfortune that the historians of the French Revolution of 1789 are, for the most part, either Royalist or Jacobin partisans. No correct estimate of the French Revolution can, in my opinion, be formed, without condemning *both* systems. In the existing histories, the historian is always either pleading the cause of the Revolution against the royalists, or of the old monarchy against the revolutionists. What I want is a historian who will enquire whether either system is good, and whether it follows that, because the Revolution was an evil, the old monarchy was not also an evil.

I am not surprised to hear you repeat the statement, so often made, that the French Revolution of 1789 was caused by the writings of the philosophers. But you must remember that the Revolution of 1789 was a great political and social convulsion, and that the attacks of the philosophers were principally directed against the church and religion. The church was the great enemy to free discussion on philosophical subjects. The government prevented free discussion on the politics of the day; but it was the church which was the chief enemy of writers such as the Encyclopédistes. The philosophers hated the church, and therefore

they attacked religion. The animosity of some of these writers is unintelligible, until the provocation which they had received from the clergy is remembered. The author of the *Système de la Nature* denounces theism with the bitterness of a personal enemy; he writes against God as Junius wrote against George the Third or the Duke of Grafton. There have been two reformations of the Catholic Church; one was the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, originating in Germany; the other was the free-thinking reformation of the eighteenth century, originating in France. Voltaire was the Luther of the latter reformation; but he was not a political reformer. His *Siècle de Louis XIV.* is the work of an admirer of the old monarchy. It was read with enthusiasm at its first publication in the reign of Louis XV., because it was thought to contain a satire of the existing debasement, by contrasting it with the glories of the previous reign. His 'Philosophical Dictionary' contains some articles against cruel punishments and war; in one article he ridicules some points of étiquette and titles of honour; in another, he reprobates the variety of customary laws in France: he thinks that a democratic government will be mild and humane, but that it is only suited to a small territory: he makes some general observations on the comparative advantages of the three forms of government; but, as Lacretelle remarks, in his 'History of the Reign of Louis XV.,' Voltaire

never directed his thoughts towards a political revolution. Though an enemy of many of the abuses of the *ancien régime*, he was far from being a democrat, a leveller, or a communist. The same remark applies to most of the other French philosophers of the regency and the reign of Louis XV. They had no intention of undermining or destroying the government of their country. The monarchy of France was, on the eve of the Revolution, believed to be seated on a rock; the Revolution was a great and universal surprise to the whole of Europe. The principal and almost the only anti-monarchical writer among the philosophers was Rousseau; but he was a Genevese Swiss, and a republican by birth. His *Contrat Social* furnished the political creed of the French Revolution, and certainly an emptier and more shallow performance never guided the opinions of men at a great crisis. The old French monarchy attempted to stifle free philosophical discussion; but they utterly failed. The censorship of the press was evaded; but the severe prohibitory laws, enforced with sufficient frequency to remind the world of their existence, kept the philosophical writers in a state of permanent irritation against the established order of things. The true cause of the Revolution was the badness of the old French government; as soon as the financial difficulties of the country led to the assembling of the States General, and a representative assembly, armed with legislative powers, was called into being, a

series of changes began, which neither the king nor his ministers could control, and on which the nobles looked from a distance, as helpless and bewildered spectators. If the philosophers were incendiaries, they were surrounded by combustible materials, which the vices of the monarchical government had accumulated. If Louis XVI. had had the force of character and the sagacity requisite for supporting Turgot in his reforms, he might have laughed at the *Encyclopédie* and the *Contrat Social.*

MONARCHICUS.

It is easy to condemn a system which has fallen. We know now that the French monarchy was overthrown, and it has a plausible sound to say that it fell through its own vices. In my opinion it fell through a combination of unhappy accidents, but principally through the inherent badness of the men who forced themselves into power at a moment of political agitation and disturbance. You yourself admit that the Revolution was a surprise to France. If the people had been discontented with their government, the surprise would not have been as great and as universal as it was.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I can see nothing accidental in the fall of the French monarchy, except the moment at which it took place. It might have been postponed, and it might have taken place by other means; but the system was too bad to be permanent.

MONARCHICUS.

At all events the system which succeeded it was still worse. Whatever the disease may have been, it was not so bad as the remedy. No sane man who is acquainted with the history of the time, and is not blinded by some political theory, would prefer the reign of Robespierre to that of Louis XVI. For this reason I must differ from your estimate of Bonaparte. He has been called the heir of the Revolution; he was more properly its executioner. If he was its heir, he was one of those heirs who succeed to the inheritance by killing their ancestor. He had the merit of extinguishing the revolutionary government at the 18th of Brumaire, and of establishing a substantially monarchical government in its place. He revived many of the institutions of the old monarchy; he restored order, and a regular administration of public affairs; he made himself master of France; and the French people showed by their conduct during the Revolution that they needed a master. I cannot therefore assent to your doctrine that he was a scourge to modern Europe.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

In order to form a correct judgment of Napoleon, you must take the entire man. You must not confine yourself to a part, and that too the least important part, of his influence. I hold the old French monarchy responsible for the state of

things and the state of society which produced first the Revolution and afterwards Napoleon. The former was a fearful scourge to France; the latter was a fearful scourge to Europe. One of the worst consequences of a bad system of government is that it can hardly be eradicated by fair means, and that it creates a sort of necessity for an energetic, unscrupulous man who possesses the strength and daring requisite for putting it down. O'Connell was a man of this sort: he was created by the old system of Irish government—a system not so bad as the old French monarchy, but nevertheless very bad. His mixed influence, made up of unscrupulous measures and beneficial results, was described by the saying of Robert Smith, that he was a man whom you ought to hang, and to whom you ought then to build a monument under his gallows.

Napoleon had the energy and ability necessary for compressing the French Revolution; but he moulded the political elements of the country into a form suited to his own military policy and schemes of foreign conquest. After having, by his marvellous genius for war, conquered half Europe, he became so intoxicated by ambition that he lost more than he had gained, and thus reduced France to a narrower territory than she possessed at the end of the Revolution. He has thus given to France a perpetual reminiscence of extensive empire, and an incentive to vindictive war for its recovery. He has likewise impressed

upon the whole continent of Europe a military character, and has caused the emblems of brute force to be everywhere predominant. He organized the system of conscription and large standing armies, and made every court an *état major*.

Alas! poor Tocqueville! Would that he had lived to execute his projected survey of Napoleon's policy. A history of Napoleon, affording a correct estimate of his character and influence, is the great desideratum of modern political literature; and no such work could produce any impression on the opinion of France, unless it were written by a Frenchman. An unfavourable judgment of Napoleon—the only judgment consistent with truth—would, if proceeding from an Englishman, be infallibly attributed to national prejudice and jealousy.

MONARCHICUS.

Whatever may be the military character of the present age, it is certain that the nineteenth century is an improvement upon the eighteenth. The French Revolution produced at least this good effect, that it destroyed the aristocratic privileges and legal inequalities of the eighteenth century. It levelled everything before the law. Its positive fruits were found intolerable; its democratic institutions were rejected by the common consent of France, and the country was placed by Napoleon under the wholesome rule of an impartial despotism. Napoleon extracted the good part of the revolutionary system—its equality; he

excluded the bad part—its democratic government. The result is that France now enjoys the best form of political rule which can be contrived: namely, a pure monarchy without an aristocratic class.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I agree with you in your characteristic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but I differ entirely from you in your comparative estimate of them. The eighteenth is pre-eminently the aristocratic century. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries literature and science were addressed to scholars and men of learning; courtiers, great lords, and fine gentlemen did not read. Literature was stiff and pedantic; most books were written in Latin. But in the eighteenth century a class of writers arose in France, Italy, and England, who treated philosophical and even scientific subjects in a style adapted to unlearned persons; their works were addressed to the educated classes generally, not merely to professors and recluse students; men of the world became readers; philosophy was rendered fashionable. Literature had not penetrated to the general public; there were no cheap publications; the periodical press had not enlisted able writers, and it exercised little influence; there were scarcely any schools for the working classes. Literature was confined to the upper ranks of society, but it included the whole of those ranks. It had

emerged from colleges and cloisters, and had entered the drawing-room.

The feelings of the aristocratic orders towards the bulk of the people in the last century, though proud and contemptuous, were not hostile or resentful. Accordingly, opinion among the European aristocracies had never been more liberal and comprehensive than it was in the twenty years which immediately preceded the French Revolution. If the old institutions and old governments had been allowed to thaw gradually under the genial influence of the enlightenment which at that time diffused itself among the aristocratic classes of Europe, and had even penetrated into the antechambers of courts and the saloons of princes, the world would have been saved all the bloodshed and spoliation of the French Revolution, and the devastating wars of the French Empire. Above all, it would have been saved from the suspicious fear with which the governing and aristocratic classes were taught by that disastrous convulsion to regard the mass of the people. It was not unnatural that, after the Reign of Terror, a patrician should look upon a plebeian as a monster eager to devour him—as an enemy ready to despoil him of his property, and perhaps to cut his throat. The eighteenth century was, as I have already said, peculiarly the age of aristocracy. The nineteenth century is the age of democratic despotism. This double character has been impressed upon it by the French Revolution and

Empire. The reaction against the invasions and conquests of Napoleon has also given this century another characteristic. It is the age of nationality. The philosophical spirit of the last century was hostile to the spirit of narrow nationality and exclusive patriotism. It was cosmopolitan and comprehensive. The leading French writers of the last century were tolerant in their judgments of foreign countries. Their leading writers now are, with some remarkable exceptions, distinguished by indiscriminating prejudice and bigotry towards foreign nations. In this respect, as in the others above noticed, the nineteenth seems to me to have fallen behind the eighteenth century.

There is often a disposition in persons of aristocratic politics to shelter themselves under monarchy, to hoist monarchical colours, and even to render themselves the instruments of a monarchical policy. The English Tories, though naturally an aristocratic party, have often betrayed their own order, and have made themselves mere monarchists. They occupied this position during the first part of the reign of George III., and were willing to lay the liberties of the country at the foot of the King. They censured the Whigs, not for being democratical, but for being anti-monarchical. I am not of that opinion. I am hostile to democracy, but I am also hostile to monarchy. What I wish to see established is the ascendancy of aristocracy against monarchy on the one hand, and against democracy on the other.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I have hitherto remained silent, while you two have been discussing the respective claims of the one or the few to govern the community. But it is time for me to put in a word in behalf of the people, whose claims you agree in disallowing. I concur in all that Aristocraticus has said against monarchy, and I could strengthen his objections by additional arguments. I conclude, however, that he will inform us of the grounds on which he would exclude the bulk of the people from all share in the governing power.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I have already given my reasons for preferring a plurality of rulers to unity. I have stated my grounds of difference from Monarchicus, and have attempted to make them good by argument. Thus far Democraticus and I are agreed. We differ as to the form of plural or republican government, and as to the number and character of the persons who are to wield the sovereign power. My position is a middle one between the two extremes of monarchy and democracy. I object to placing the entire power of government in the hands of one man; I likewise object to distributing it in equal shares among all the free adult males of the community.

I will now explain why, objecting to monarchy, and approving of republican government, I disapprove of democracy.

The ancient democracies resembled the Southern States of the American Union in being founded upon a working class of slaves. No democratic state existed in antiquity, in which the entire community was free. In every democratic state, the majority of the population was servile, and excluded from political rights. Political power was divided among the entire body of free citizens, and was limited to them. The ancient aristocracies and oligarchies were likewise based upon a working class of slaves, but the entire citizen or free class did not share in the governing power, which was restricted by some qualification of birth, race, wealth, or other distinction. In an ancient aristocracy the demus or plebs consisted of a class similar to the "poor whites" in one of the Southern States of the American Union: a similar class likewise existed in an ancient democracy, in which it possessed the chief political power.

The philosophers and historians of antiquity were in general favourable to an aristocracy, and hostile to democratic government. They held that knowledge and intelligence were essential qualifications in a ruler, and therefore they excluded the poorer citizens from power. They looked upon the demus or plebs as hostile to reason and moderation, and as partaking of the ochlocratic character, the antithesis of wisdom and virtue. I remark incidentally that they were likewise anti-monarchical, except when they con-

ceived the monarch in the idealized form of Xenophon's Cyrus.

The principal defect which the ancient politicians found in aristocratic government, was its liability to be overthrown by the dissensions of the leading aristocrats. This is the main objection which Darius, the advocate of monarchy, in the debate of the Persian conspirators in Herodotus, makes to oligarchy. Aristotle lays it down that oligarchy is in general a short-lived form of government, but admits that it is enduring if the governing class is free from discord. Now, even in antiquity, the aristocratic governments were the most long-lived. Sparta retained her oligarchical constitution unchanged for many centuries. The Carthaginian constitution was stable; and the Roman government, in which the patrician influence was always powerful, if not predominant, until the civil wars, lasted, according to the received chronology, for more than four centuries. This, the principal objection of the ancient politicians, is therefore confuted by the experience of antiquity itself. Among the mediæval governments, the Venetian aristocracy was likewise distinguished by its stability.

DEMOCRATICUS.

When the members of an aristocracy are leagued together for the purpose of plundering and oppressing the people, they can maintain concord with one another. But when the people are so

weak, that the governing aristocracy regard them without fear, their mutual jealousies break out, and follow their natural course. We see these causes in full operation during the continuance of the feudal system. The feudal system was essentially aristocratic; when it was in vigour, the people went for nothing, and the king for little. The substantial power was lodged in the great barons; and they were perpetually at variance, and often at war, with one another. A worse system of government than the feudal system cannot exist, although it has pleased some modern writers, from a reactionary spirit, and a love of fantastic paradox, to paint it in brilliant colours. The reign of our Henry III., when the country was lacerated with incessant hostilities, and the king was controlled by a council of "ordainers," is a perfect type of the feudal system of government.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The feudal system was a defective form of aristocracy. Still it had this merit, that it superseded a worse system, and it served as a stepping-stone to what was a better system in some countries, and what might have been a better system in all. It was better than the uniform anarchy and debasement which succeeded the Roman period, and the first invasions of the Teutonic tribes. The feudal lords organized a resistance to the king; they often acted as a body, and they laid the foundation of a corporate form of government:

the feudal assemblies of the barons and clergy were the origin of the Assemblies of Estates, in which all classes of the community were represented. Out of the primitive Assembly of Estates the Parliament of England was gradually evolved: and if in other countries the Assembly of Estates failed to establish its authority, and was reduced to a nullity by the preponderating power of the king, this was not the fault of the feudal system.

However, the tendency of aristocratic government to generate discord in the ruling class, is not the ground on which the main objection to it rests in modern times. The modern objection is, not the mutual jealousies of the aristocrats, but their supposed combination against the rest of the people. Their separate interests, their exclusive privileges, their anti-popular tendencies, their patrician pride, their contempt for plebeians, their hereditary pretensions, their titles of honour, their orders of knighthood, their heraldic decorations, their liveries and ostentatious equipages, have furnished the principal arguments against them, and have created the antipathy with which they have been regarded. These assumptions and distinctions have wounded the feeling of equality—the "as good as you" sentiment which is essential to democracy.

Now I quite understand the existence of this feeling, and am willing to appease it by any sacrifice which is not inconsistent with good go-

vernment. Envy, though rarely avowed, is perhaps one of the most powerful agencies in politics. I dread the Nemesis of Jacobinism, and am ready to propitiate this stern and sanguinary goddess by all legitimate means. But the attempt to attain to perfect equality in the distribution of the powers of government seems to me as absurd as the attempt to attain to perfect equality in the distribution of property. Pure democracy is, in my judgment, as unsound in theory, and as mischievous in practice, as communism.

DEMOCRATICUS.

The main objection to aristocratic government is the danger of entrusting political power to a minority, and sometimes to a small minority. The interests of a minority are separate from those of the community, and often hostile to them. An aristocratic class always governs for the sake of its own distinct and special interests; whereas the interests of a majority of the people are identical with the interests of the people at large, and if the governing power is vested in a majority of the people, the interests of the whole people will be protected and secured. I do not defend the popular excesses of the French Revolution—which you yourself rightly trace to the influence of the old monarchy—and I do not identify myself with Jacobinism—but the feeling of hatred which the conduct of the French noblesse had implanted in the Tiers État, is, in my mind, a conclusive proof

of the alienation of an aristocratic class from the rest of the community.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

Your argument as to the necessary antagonism between the interests of an aristocratic class and the interests of the rest of the community, is founded, in great measure, upon the example of the old French noblesse; and I entirely dispute the cogency of this example. Your reasoning confounds aristocracy as a class with aristocracy as a form of government. The French government was a monarchy, and the monarchy used its influence for corrupting the aristocratic class. It maintained the civil privileges of the nobles, and by maintaining their privileges, made them unpopular. Through jealousy of their power it withdrew them from political activity, and made them helpless and indolent. If the French government had been aristocratic, the nobles would have possessed and exercised political power. There might have been rivalries among them, but they would at least have been free from the vices which they acquired under the enervating and debasing influence of their royal masters. Moreover, if the government had been aristocratic, the nobles would have stood alone; and it may be doubted whether they would have been able, without the assistance of the monarchical power, to maintain the privileges which rendered them so odious: they would have yielded to the democratic pres-

sure. In England, where the king was not a monarch, and where the aristocracy had great political power, an entire equality of civil privileges was established between the aristocratic class and the rest of the community. The English aristocracy and the French aristocracy of the 18th century present opposite appearances. The former had political power, but civil equality with the rest of the people. The latter were destitute of political power, but they possessed civil privileges. This difference was owing to the difference in the forms of government. France was an absolute monarchy; England was an aristocratic republic.

DEMOCRATICUS.

Wherever an aristocratic class exists, whether in an absolute monarchy, or in an aristocratic republic, it is hostile to the people, and pursues its exclusive interests at their cost. If a minority obtains political power, it will abuse that power; it is only by vesting power in a majority of the people that its abuse can be prevented. If an aristocratic class governs, the interests of the working people, who form the bulk of every community, will infallibly be disregarded.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

My wish to exclude the working people from a share in the governing power is founded upon their unfitness for its exercise; not upon any

jealousy or antipathy of class. Government ought, in my opinion, to be formed on the principle of tutelage. I consider the uneducated classes to stand to the educated classes, with respect to government, in the same relation as children to adults. They are disqualified by the want of knowledge and intelligence, from deciding on the difficult questions involved in practical legislation and administration. They are moreover deficient in the proprietary feeling, which is one of the great safeguards of society. Living on wages themselves, and associating exclusively with others who live on wages, they have not that respect for property which personal interest gives, and which illiterate, or at the least imperfectly educated, persons cannot learn from theory. It is to be remembered that property is a paradox, as monogamy is a paradox. They are both contrary to the first superficial impressions of a speculative mind. The paradoxical character of the institution of property is displayed by Paley in his apologue of the pigeons. Dr. Johnson says that he should not have been surprised, if out of ten schoolboys set to write verses on Marlborough's campaigns, nine had brought him Addison's simile of the Angel. In like manner I might say that, if ten clever youths were to begin speculating on the institution of property, I should not be surprised if nine arrived at the Platonic theory of communism. Habit has reconciled us to the institution of property, and to the inequalities of

social condition which it necessarily involves, and has taught us to regard it as an obvious truth; but it startles the philanthropist, when he first reflects upon social laws without taking anything for granted. We ought not to wonder if speculative communism finds favour among the non-proprietary classes.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I entirely dispute the doctrine of tutelage, which is the basis of your theory of aristocratic government. No theory of political government is, in my opinion, sound, which is not founded upon mistrust. It ought to be assumed that every person who acts as the member of a minority has interests hostile to those of the community. Democracy rests upon this basis, and gives no man credit for good intentions. It neutralizes his sinister interests by merging him in the majority. It trusts nobody; and therefore repudiates the idea of tutelage as applied to political rule. A court of chancery has no sinister interests, and therefore can properly be trusted to appoint a guardian for a minor; but where is the superior power which can be trusted to appoint an aristocratical body as the government of a nation? Even if an angel from heaven were to select a set of governors on aristocratic principles, they would soon be corrupted by the possession of power, and cease to justify the preference which at first they may have deserved.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I do not wish for a narrow oligarchy, like the Thirty Tyrants of Athens, or the Roman decemvirs, nor an oligarchy with exclusive privileges and impassable barriers. I wish for an aristocracy of sufficient comprehensiveness to prevent personal combination. Under such an aristocracy, narrow interests would not influence the measures of the Government. The knowledge and intelligence of the ruling class (though they were not a majority of the nation), controlled by publicity of discussion and public opinion, would in general provide an adequate security against the predominance of interests hostile to the community.

DEMOCRATICUS.

In England the power of the aristocracy is tempered by the influences upon which you rely; and yet in England you have had such cases as that of the Corn Laws, in which the landed aristocracy laid the rest of the country under a tribute for their own benefit, and raised the price of bread for the sake of increasing their own rents.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The Corn Laws were part of a policy which was established on patriotic grounds, and which was at one time sincerely believed, even by enlightened men, to be beneficial to the entire community. There has been protection for manu-

facturers and merchants, and even for artizans, as well as for agriculturists. It is a mistake to suppose that the agricultural interest is, in this country, composed only of landlords the recipients of rent. The tenant-farmers, who paid rent, were at least as stout in their defence of the Corn Laws as the landlords. I admit that the doctrine of Free Trade belongs to the very A B C of politics, and that a person, free from interest, who cannot follow the reasoning on which it is founded, is not gifted with high logical capacity. Still, the example of the United States shows that a democratic community may embrace the policy of Protection, and that it does not require the preponderance of an interested minority for its support. It is moreover easy for a limited class, under a democratic government, to promote their exclusive interest by that process which in America is called "log rolling," and which used to be well understood, on a small scale, in Irish grand jury rooms. A body which counts a certain number of votes in the legislature, can sell its support to another section of the chamber, for a particular question, on condition of reciprocal support to its own question. By a corrupt mutual bargain of this kind, sectional interests can be promoted even in a democratic state. It should also be borne in mind that the English Corn Law of 1815 was passed in the year after the war, when the belief in the advantage of rendering this country independent of foreign supply had much influence.

Remember, too, that protection of agriculture and manufactures is not the only sort of legislative protection. There is also the protection of labour; and if the supremacy of the working classes were established in this country, and the elections in every large town were directed by the managing committee of a Trades' Union, we should probably see attempts made to invest the Trade Union regulations with the authority of law.

However, I am not going to maintain the proposition that aristocratic Governments are perfect; or that they do not, like other modes of government, make mistakes. I am not a believer in the infallibility of aristocracy; I only assert that it is a better form of government than either monarchy or democracy. What I particularly wish to insist upon, is, that democracy is essentially the government of the working classes, and that this has hitherto been an untried experiment in a large European country. With the single exception of Switzerland, the experiment has hitherto been confined to states which are colonies of England: ndependent, like the United States; dependent, like the North American and Australian provinces. The typical government of an English colony is democratic; and both in the United States and in Australia we have examples of popular Governments, in which political power is vested in the working classes. But these are not old countries, full of large cities which contain organized bodies of artizans and operatives; the bulk of the popula-

tion is agricultural, and the cultivation is either carried on by the owner himself, or he is a slave master. This is a totally different social condition from that which obtains in England or France; and the working of a democratic government in North America or Australia is therefore different from what it would be in these countries. The most democratic politician of antiquity never contemplated an entire community of freemen, in which the manual labourers, being the numerical majority, should possess and exercise the governing power. A δούλων πόλις—a state formed of emancipated slaves—seemed to them a political monstrosity. Democracy, in England or France, would practically be a government of that class which an ancient democrat would have considered a slave class.

DEMOCRATICUS.

It may be true, as you say, that the free dominant aristocratic classes have hitherto excluded democratic government from Europe as a permanent institution, and that it has only taken root, on a large scale, in the colonies of England. But this fact does not prove that it ought to be excluded from the old settled populous European countries, or that the working classes in those countries ought not to exercise political power. What is called an abuse of political power by the working classes, means only that they will exercise it in a manner beneficial to themselves and to the bulk of the community.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

What I object to, is the exclusive prevalence of democratic power, and the untempered government of the working classes. The theoretical politicians, both of ancient and modern times, have concurred in eulogizing a mixed government; a government in which monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical elements are combined and compounded. Their language on this subject is not indeed quite consistent or perspicuous; but they all agree in thinking that a government should not be exclusively democratic. They temper aristocracy with democracy, and therefore allow a certain weight to the aristocratic element. This is the form of government for which I contend; I am quite aware of the importance of numbers in a state. I know that a numerical majority cannot, and ought not to be overlooked in the administration of a government; but I maintain that the multitude will be better governed by the Enlightened Few than by the Ignorant Many. I am willing to make a compromise with democracy. I do not wish that democratic influence should be altogether excluded; but I cannot allow it the mastery.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I can assent to no compromise. I must insist upon absolute democratic supremacy. I regard all aristocratic government as essentially selfish

and antipopular, and hence I treat all negociation with the aristocratic enemy as an act of political treason. My principles of government are simple, and in their simplicity lies their excellence. If I adhere to those principles, I cannot parley with aristocracy.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The compromise which I offer to democracy is not an unreasonable one. I do not desire to see an aristocracy founded exclusively on hereditary descent, like those ancient commonwealths in which a certain number of γένη, or *gentes*, monopolized the entire governing power. I do not wish to have a number of patrician families, who (as at Rome) practically fill the senate and all the high offices. I wish to see a representative aristocratic government created by popular election; but not so popular as to place the entire power in the hands of the working classes. The representative system has rendered a moderate mixture of aristocracy and democracy practicable without resorting to objectionable contrivances, such as the Roman method of centuries, small for the rich, and large for the poor, or even plural voting, as in many of our municipal elections. By a proper application of the method of local representation, and by the formation of limited constituencies, the representation of minorities, the great object of our modern builders of Ideal States, can be legitimately accomplished.

A representative assembly is itself a sort of aristocracy. It is a standing committee of the nation, elected by the body of the people to manage their affairs. Make the elective suffrage as wide as you please, and there is a vast difference between such a select assembly, and the promiscuous assemblage taken from the entire free population, which met in the Athenian pnyx to vote upon public affairs. A parliamentary assembly acquires a limited corporate character; the members of it become personally known to each other; and they gradually form almost professional habits of business. I would wish to see such a body elected by a large number of voters, sufficiently large to prevent the predominance of narrow interests, but not so large as to place the representative body under an overruling democratic control.

DEMOCRATICUS.

Such a system as you describe would not be a bad system; but it would be good only because it contained many democratic elements, and made some approximation to democracy. It would be better if all the aristocratic leaven were excluded, and if it were converted into a pure democracy.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

My belief, on the contrary, is, that its goodness depends upon its stopping short of democracy; and upon the presence of the aristocratic leaven

by which you consider the mass to be tainted. I conceive the essence of the system to reside in the mixture of its elements: I would not allow any force to move directly according to its original impulse; I would always resolve it into the diagonal.

DEMOCRATICUS.

You talk, in vague terms, of the mixture of aristocratic and democratic elements being effected by a proper arrangement of the suffrage; but you overlook the fact that an hereditary nobility, possessing certain legal privileges, is of the essence of aristocratic government, and that this institution necessarily implies legal and social inequality. It also implies a branch of the legislature, founded upon hereditary privilege. The admission of the hereditary principle, unconnected with personal merit, into the government, seems to me inconsistent with all sound political doctrine, and on this ground alone I consider the aristocratic system of rule as untenable.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I do not admit that an hereditary nobility, possessed of political privileges, is essential to the existence of an aristocratic government, though I hold its presence in an aristocratic state to be politically expedient. If the suffrage is so arranged that the numerical preponderance of the working classes is prevented from determining

the character of the government, I consider the state as aristocratical. But I would remark that the existence of two chambers is treated by most politicians as expedient, and an hereditary nobility forms the best solution of the problem of a second chamber. The hereditary privileges of a nobility ought, moreover, as in England, to be purely political. Beyond social precedence, an English peer has no privilege unconnected with his seat in the House of Lords. I also wish to remind you that powerful hereditary patrician families belong especially to free states; that they are altogether wanting in the Asiatic despotisms; and have been viewed with jealousy by the absolute European monarchs. Unless democratic habits and opinions are deeply rooted in a people (as in that of the United States), such families form the most powerful opponents to absolute monarchy, and are the most efficient safeguards of public liberty. If the French had not so effectually extirpated their old aristocracy in their first revolution, they would have incurred less danger of falling under the dominion of a single master.

DEMOCRATICUS.

An aristocratic government, which proscribed all hereditary rank (provided such a government could be supposed to exist), would disarm many of my objections. But to an aristocratic class, possessing hereditary political privileges, in an

aristocracy, I have a deep-rooted repugnance, and no person of genuine democratic opinions can ever be reconciled to it.

CRITO.

Much as I object to all ideal plans of a Perfect State, to all schemes of a commonwealth, independent of a fixed basis of fact, I nevertheless agree with you, Aristocraticus and Democraticus, in repudiating Despotic Monarchy as the government best fitted for a civilized European state, and in holding that some form of representative institutions would afford it the best chance of good political management and social happiness. But having made this concession to your Political Idealism, I cannot go one step further. I distrust all revolutionary movements, and should be unwilling to resort to violence for effecting any change of government. If I had the misfortune to be the subject of a despotism, I should in general take as my practical maxim the words of Eprius Marcellus in the Roman senate at the accession of Vespasian: "Se meminisse temporum quibus natus sit, quam civitatis formam patres avique instituerint; ulteriora mirari, præsentia sequi; bonos imperatores voto expetere, qualescunque tolerare."

I question, moreover, the applicability of representative institutions to an Asiatic state. The Oriental nations have hitherto been distinguished by three characteristics hostile to the working of

a free government, namely, perfidy, cruelty, and corruption. Where every man in a public situation is faithless and takes bribes, and where sanguinary inflictions produce a sense of insecurity and a desire of revenge, it is scarcely possible that any form of corporate government should be organized, or that men should act together as colleagues and equals. Such has hitherto been the nature of Asiatics; they appear, both in intelligence and morality, to be inferior to Europeans; and to be mentally incompetent to the solution of political problems which Europeans have successfully solved. An increased familiarity with the Oriental character, and with the interior of Asiatic monarchies, has dissipated the illusions which deceived the last century. A person who had witnessed the outrages of the Taepings would read with wonder the eulogies of Voltaire upon the "philosophic Chinese"; and a sufferer from the mutiny of the native Indian army would be sceptical about the mildness and gentleness of the Hindu character. As to the negroes, it would be ridiculous to speak of a native African community as a fit subject for representative government.

DEMOCRATICUS.

This is a doctrine to which I cannot subscribe. It is inconsistent with religion. It supposes a natural inequality in mankind, and a natural unfitness in the larger part of our race for a good

political regimen. The Britons as they are described by Cæsar, and the Germans as they are described by Tacitus, were certainly not in advance of the social state of the modern Orientals; and yet they have long since reached the stage of civilization which fits them for representative government. I can see no reason why you should suppose the Asiatics and the Africans to be predestined to misgovernment, to be placed under a natural disqualification for popular institutions.

CRITO.

I judge from experience, and I assume that the Oriental nature will continue to be hereafter what it has been heretofore. I must likewise dispute your opinion that it is impious to suppose a natural inequality in the mental capacity of different races of mankind. I see no more difficulty in supposing a natural difference between a Hottentot or a Malay and a European than in recognizing a natural difference between a mastiff and a greyhound, or between a Shetland pony and a London dray-horse.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The fitness of Asiatic and African communities for representative institutions is at present purely speculative. Nobody expects to see a Turkish parliament, or even an Indian council at Calcutta, composed of native members. I will, therefore,

confine my view to civilized European, American, and Australian communities. My position is that, for this circle of nations, the best form of government is an aristocratic representative constitution, or, perhaps I might say, an aristocratico-democratic representative constitution, provided it be understood that the aristocratic element is real and not fictitious or formal, and that the aristocratic class has a substantive voice in the government. I affirm that good government cannot be obtained by any other form; and that despotic monarchy or unmixed democracy are, in their several ways, objectionable, fraught with mischief, and inferior to this form. This is the form of government which it is the interest of the leading nations of the civilized world to cultivate, and to attempt to bring to perfection.

There are two great problems to be solved in a representative constitution. One is the relation of the representative body to its constituents, and to the community at large; the other is the relation of the executive government to the representative body. With regard to the first of these problems, there is between us two an irreconcilable difference. You would extend the electoral suffrage as widely as possible; I would confine it to a certain section of the free community.

DEMOCRATICUS.

You may add, that I would give to the voters the protection of secret suffrage, or what is called

the Ballot, against intimidation, so as to enable each voter to express his genuine and unbiassed opinion, and to prevent the franchise from being a mockery and an imposture.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The expediency of the ballot, as a system of secret voting, now rests principally on the example of the Australian colonies. It is admitted that the American ballot is practically a system of open voting, and that in the American elections votes are not concealed. Now, I have no hesitation in saying, that, in my opinion, the influence exercised at elections by the landlord over the tenant, by the employer over the workman, is one of the legitimate influences of property, and ought not to be disturbed. Like other moral influences, it may be abused; but public opinion is, in the long run, a sufficient safeguard against its abuse. It is one of the indirect means by which a preponderance is secured to intelligence in an electoral system, without resorting to the contrivance of plural votes.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I admire your candour in spurning all subterfuge, and in putting the aristocratic argument against secret voting on its true ground. I know of no legitimate influence of property, except its direct economical uses; I cannot consent that it should be employed for a political object. It seems to

me to be sheer hypocrisy to give a man a vote, and to deny him the only means by which he can obtain its full and free exercise. It is only by secret voting that the working classes can give a genuine expression to their opinions, and can secure the return of representatives really devoted to their interests.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I am afraid that there is no chance of our coming to any agreement on the question of the electoral suffrage. We start from different principles, and must arrive at different results. Your doctrines are very specious, and your deductions from them quite logical; but, in my opinion, your system is defective, because it assumes the entire community to be better than it is, in any existing country, or is likely to be, within any assignable period. The democratic theory of government, which assumes all members of the community to be equally competent judges of public affairs, is, in my opinion, like the Quaker system of government and international law. A Quaker lays it down that, if men were true Christians, and acted upon their religious principles, there would be no necessity for civil government to protect you against the injustice of your neighbour at home, or for armies and navies to defend you against the attacks of your neighbours abroad. Hence he draws the conclusion that civil government and military force are useless, and, being useless, are

pernicious. The hypothetical syllogism is valid: the fallacy consists in assuming as true an hypothesis which is made only for the sake of the argument, and which is false in fact. If all men were what you assume them to be, equally competent to judge of political affairs, your theory of government would be sound; but they are not equally competent, and therefore your theory is unsound.

DEMOCRATICUS.

My argument does not compel me to maintain that all men are equally competent to judge of public affairs. What I maintain is, that all men are sufficiently competent judges for the exercise of the electoral suffrage, and for choosing representatives; and I further maintain that, if they are not allowed this independent privilege, they are at the mercy of the portion of the community which governs, and that, if they escape being plundered and oppressed, it will be owing to the voluntary forbearance of their rulers, not to any constitutional safeguard.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

You may think me credulous and easily duped by mere appearances of virtue; but I prefer a government constituted on aristocratic principles (provided that the number of persons included is large, and that there is no impassable barrier) to a government constituted on democratic principles,

as a security for the working classes themselves. I say of a well constituted aristocratic body with reference to these classes, what Juvenal says of the gods, "Carior est illis homo quam sibi."

DEMOCRATICUS.

If aristocrats had angelic natures, your doctrine would hold good; but as long as they remain men, I must be permitted to insist on such securities as human institutions demand. However, I fear that we make no impression on one another by our arguments, and that we weary our friends by our dissensions; let us, then, pass on to your next point.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I have already said that I consider the representative system as the philosopher's stone of politics; it is the master key which opens all locks, so far as European, American, and Australian communities are concerned. It makes good aristocratic government possible; it enables you to throw your net wide enough to comprehend a sufficient representation of the community; and it reconciles selection with freedom from all definite lines and impassable barriers. My first condition for a good representative system is, that it should be aristocratic; this we have discussed; my second condition is, that the relation between the executive and the representative body should be well organized.

DEMOCRATICUS.

Let us hear what you have to say on the second of these points. Perhaps on this part of the subject you may find me less intractable.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

It appears to me that the principal executive officers ought, if not by law, at least by a constitutional necessity, to be members of the supreme legislature. The result will be, that they will be persons virtually elected by the majority of the chamber for the time being. The advantage of this system is, that there can never be a permanent conflict between the executive and the majority of the legislature. The disadvantage is, that the executive offices will be treated merely as a prize of victory between the opposite parties, and that parliamentary management will degenerate into a mere game of interested faction. Now, when you come to the *ultima ratio* of government, when you deal with the forces which determine the seat of power, you must be prepared for a considerable alloy of the bad parts of human nature; you must not expect to be able to prevent a large infusion of selfishness, of deceit and intrigue, and of corruption. All those plans of constitutions which have their appropriate security against every conceivable form of evil belong to the imagination, not to reality. The best form of government is the least bad.

> Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur; optimus ille est
> Qui minimis urgetur.

I am not so ignorant of the past, or so blind with regard to the present, as to believe that there ever can be a parliamentary system without a strong dash of selfish motives and of sinister influence; but the interested play of parliamentary tactics, when corrected by effectual publicity, is a less evil than an immoveable executive, acting independently of the supreme legislature. The most powerful check upon the misconduct of a parliamentary body is effective publicity; and this is best obtained by the regular publication, in the newspapers, of accurate and full reports of the debates, and by the comments of the press to which that publication gives rise. This system is now completely organized in England; and it may be said with truth that the reporting of the debates is a necessary complement of our parliamentary constitution. It must be borne in mind that the vices most complained of in our parliamentary system belonged to a time when the debates were surreptitiously reported, and when the reports were meagre and inaccurate—when, moreover, the newspapers contained only news, and editorial articles on public affairs were unknown. The criticism of cool and impartial bystanders, who are not, like the parliamentary combatants themselves, heated by the passions engendered in the actual strife, and who do not share their personal interests and personal ambition, is the best security for the good working of a popular legislative body.

CRITO.

Permit me to interpose a remark in the midst of your discussion. I am not only willing but desirous of giving due weight to the element of race in all political questions, but there is one point on which it seems to me to be carried too far. I allude to the argument, sometimes used by the friends of despotic government, that the Anglo-Saxon race is alone fitted for representative institutions, on account of its calm and dispassionate nature; and that other races are incapable of exercising that self-control which is indispensable for the orderly transaction of business in a large deliberative assembly. Now debates were conducted in large assemblies while the Teutonic races were still in a barbarous or semi-barbarous state; and whatever may have been the defects of the ancient commonwealths, it is certain that the impossibility of obtaining a hearing in a crowded senate, or even in the open air, did not hold a prominent place among them. The same remark applies to the mediæval republics; and it may be confidently affirmed that if the parliamentary governments of France and other continental states had not been undermined by influences more dangerous than the prejudice arising from a few tumultuous debates in their chambers, they would not have perished so speedily, or with so little effort at self-preservation.

DEMOCRATICUS.

The argument in question seems to me manifestly to confound a quality which is the result of long habit, and of the careful training of successive generations of men, with a disposition inherent in our nature. A long tuition in constitutional forms of debate is requisite before a man can sit quietly while his cherished opinions are attacked, or while his own conduct and motives, or those of his friends, are made the subjects of invective and ridicule, and can afterwards rise to defend himself in temperate argumentative language. Popular government is not to be condemned because these qualities do not spring full-grown from the throes of a revolutionary crisis. But to revert, Aristocraticus, to your second security for the proper working of a parliamentary government. I am not at all unfavourable to your plan of making the executive a standing committee of the supreme legislature, virtually elected and kept in office by the majority for the time being. I would wish the democratic influence to be as powerful and searching as possible, and to keep every part of the government, executive as well as legislative, under its constant control. The American plan of electing an irremoveable prime minister for a fixed term of four years, of making the cabinet ministers his clerks, and of excluding them from the legislative body, seems to me to be founded on a weak mistrust of the democratic influence. It is a contrivance, and a foolish contrivance, for counter-

acting the democratic tendency to change, and for giving to the executive a stability with which, it is supposed, the pressure of democratic forces would be incompatible; but I do not share those apprehensions, and am quite willing that the prizes which can be safely contended for in England by a selfish aristocracy, should, under a democracy, be contended for by the representatives of the people at large, who must in general be actuated by pure and disinterested motives.

I may here say that, admiring as I do the character and opinions of the great men who founded the government of the United States, and believing that, up to the present deplorable division, it secured more happiness to the people than the government of any other country upon the earth, I yet cannot consent that democracy should be judged by the working of the American constitution. The American constitution is an intricate system compounded of federal and state elements; the sovereignty is partitioned between the central federal power and the separate state governments. Both are indeed fashioned upon democratic principles; but the constant conflict between federal powers and state powers, and still more between federal interests and state interests, prevents the democratic element from having a perfectly free play. This conflict has been particularly manifested during the present civil war. If the United States had been a nation under a simple democratic government, the civil war would either

never have arisen, or, if it had arisen, it would not have assumed such gigantic dimensions, and it would have been brought to an earlier termination. American politics have chiefly turned on a set of compromises between the North and the South, worked out through the medium of the Federal Government. These compromises have infected the whole public life of America, and have influenced the character and conduct of all its statesmen.

The exclusion of able and highly educated men from political life in America, which appears to be a fact, is likewise attributed to the jealous and levelling spirit of democracy. I doubt whether such exclusion is the invariable concomitant of democracy; and I attribute it rather to the working of the federal system, which splits the political career into two portions, neither of which includes the entire interests and concerns of the community. The state legislature spoils congress, and congress spoils the state legislature. When to this we add the disqualification of executive officers for legislative functions, we shall find, to a certain extent, an explanation of the secondary position of a public man in the United States. He is only one degree raised above the town councillor or the vestryman. I maintain therefore that, so far as the government of the United States has been successful, its success has been owing to its democratic character; and that so far as it has been unsuccessful, its failure has been owing to its

federalist character. The unsound part of the American constitution is its federalist element; the sound part is its democratic element. The one will survive all the storms of civil war and revolution; the other will, I hope, gradually sink and disappear.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

Your attempt to transfer the blame of bad elections in the United States from democracy to federalism seems to me vain and deceptive. The true cause of the election of inferior men is the enormous size of the constituencies, and the class to which the majority of voters belong. The voters are not and cannot be personally canvassed by the candidates. The elections are managed by a caucus, or self-appointed committee of active and unscrupulous men, who select the candidates and guide the votes of the unmanageable mass of electors. The tendency of an election so conducted is to exclude men of character and ability, and to bring forward second-rate men. It is a system which necessarily leads to the degradation of the representative character, and as the nation acts through its representatives, to the degradation of the nation itself.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I do not admit that the caucus system is the exclusive cause of the inferiority of the men preferred by the American constituencies; but even if the government and legislature are composed

of second-rate men, this defect is of minor importance, provided that the interests of the great majority are faithfully represented. However, as I have already said, I consider the democratic state element far more important in the United States than their federal system. The real life of America resides in the States. If the State legislation is scrutinized, it will be found that the State laws are on the whole wisely framed, and that they tend to promote the happiness of the mass of the people more than the general legislation of any monarchical or aristocratical government which now is or ever has been. I will add that the indirect effects of democratic universal suffrage are far more than a compensation for the disadvantage of having second-rate rulers; that its tendency is to elevate the position and intelligence of the individual man, and that it prevents the existence of any such degraded class of men as is found among the lower orders in all the monarchical and aristocratical states of Europe.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I must dispute your assumption that the comparatively elevated state of the mass of the population in the Free States of the Union is owing to universal suffrage. It seems to me to be owing to economical, not to political causes. America is a new and partially settled country; there is plenty of unoccupied land for poor men, with strong arms, to cultivate as owners; this circum-

stance gives plenty and independence to the bulk of the people, and not universal suffrage. If the suffrage were given to the classes in a European state whom you describe as degraded, it would not raise them from their degradation: their social, economical, and intellectual position would remain unchanged.

MONARCHICUS.

So far am I from assenting to your doctrine that the Federal element is the bad part, and the Democratic element the good part, of the American constitution, that I hold the very reverse opinion. I trace all the defective parts of their system of government to democracy, and I conceive that these evils have to a certain extent been kept in check and repressed by the Federal influence. Whatever influence the Federal Government has exercised has been good: Federalism has made some approach to a strong centralizing government. Its tendency has been shown during the present civil war, where the President has, very properly, assumed an almost absolute power, and has enforced martial law over the entire population. It is an error to attribute the late secession to Federalism. If the entire country from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico had been under a national government, the conflict of interests between the North and South, and the differences on the subject of slavery, might equally have produced a separation and a rebellion.

DEMOCRATICUS.

You must forgive me, Monarchicus, if I decline to follow you into the controversy about the true cause of the American civil war. But this much I will say, that, according to my estimate of probability, no attempt would have been made to govern the whole country from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico by a single Democratic government. The fatal facilities offered by Federalism for bringing enormous territories under a quasi-central government have alone led to this experiment, which was sure, sooner or later, to fail. I must therefore adhere to my opinion that the Federalist, far from being the strong, is the weak point in the American system, and that Democracy cannot be fairly tried, so long as it is combined with the Federalist element.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

When a double government, such as that of the United States, has been for some time in operation, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of its two component parts, and to assign to each its proper share. The Federal Government, moreover, has itself a double character. It has a central character as opposed to the local and separate character of the state governments; it has likewise, in common with them, a democratic character, because it is constituted upon a democratic basis. Democracy has a tendency to localize

power. It is more difficult to combine several small independent democratic states under one national government, than an equal number of small states under a monarchical or aristocratic regimen. Democratic states, therefore, which adjoin one another, unwilling to part with their practical independence, naturally fall into the compromise of a qualified federalism. This system may have its defects; but it is probably the best arrangement which the circumstances admit. It affords great advantages to small free states for the management of their foreign relations. It enables them to offer a more imposing front to foreign nations; to negotiate in peace with greater effect; and if war be necessary, to resort to it with a better chance of success. I do not concur in the doctrine that Federal government is necessarily a bad government, and that small unconnected democracies are invariably preferable to a federal union of those democracies. Much, as it seems to me, depends upon the size of the Federal state; much also depends upon its territorial boundaries being fixed and inexpansive, as in the case of Switzerland, or upon its being liable to receive new states, from time to time, bringing with them large accessions of territory.

If, however, Democraticus, I were to admit the truth of your doctrine, as to the weak points of the United States Government not affording an argument against democracy, I should remark at the same time, that, upon that assumption, there

is no actually existing specimen of a pure democracy, for Switzerland is likewise a Federation. With the exception of the few remains of the free towns of the Middle Ages, the only democratic states now in existence are (as I have already said) English colonies. The United States are colonies of England, now independent; and the State governments are a mere continuation of the original colonial constitutions, with certain modifications. What is new in the United States is the Federal bond, which you say, and say truly, impedes and interferes with the free working of the democratic principle. The English dependencies, which have been colonized by Englishmen, such as the Australian, and to a great extent the North American colonies, are likewise instances of democratic government; but these colonies are still subject to the British crown, and are parts of the British empire; they are dependencies, though there is little imperial control of their internal affairs; and the legal supremacy of the mother country, capable in any extreme case of being called into activity, operates as a check upon the excesses of the democratic spirit. It may be true that the break-down of the American constitution, in the present civil war, less than a century after its foundation—in fact it only dates, in its present form, from 1787, 75 years ago, scarcely the term of a man's life—is due to its federal, rather than to its democratic elements. It may likewise be true that the success of the English democratic

dependencies may be owing to the control of the Imperial Government, sometimes exercised and always impending; but in neither case have we the simple element of democracy, working freely and disengaged from other influences. The only modern example of what a great European country would be, if placed under a democratic government, is furnished by the French republic of 1848 to 1851. This was a democracy, based on universal suffrage, and tried on the largest scale. Yet we know the result to have been that, after a short duration, it was put down by a sanguinary *coup d'état*, and was succeeded by a military despotism. With the exception of this case, which, on account of its short continuance and utter failure, will certainly not be invoked by the friends of democracy, there is no modern example to show what France would be, or England would be, if it were placed under a democratic government. In reasoning upon its probable effect in these countries, we have therefore no conclusive experience to guide us; we have no precedent applicable without making deductions and allowances which, to a great extent, destroy its applicability. Simple democratic government, without some tempering principle, can hardly be said to exist. Now it is the rarity of democracy which affords the chief argument in its favour. It profits largely by the illusion of "ignotum pro mirifico;" it is judged by presumptions, not by facts; its charms would undergo a great diminution upon

close acquaintance; but that acquaintance is not to be had, for the plain reason that a simple national democratic government is, in modern times, only to be found in Utopia.

MONARCHICUS.

Owing to the viciousness of human nature, and to the difficulty of organizing and working the political constitution of a large country, the form of government which is most widely diffused, and of which there is the largest experience, is likely to exhibit the most numerous examples of failure, and of aberrations from the standard of right. Now it cannot be disputed that monarchy is at the present time, and always has been, the prevalent form of government; probably there are at least a hundred examples of monarchy for one of oligarchy or democracy. Hence the many examples of bad monarchical government which the advocate of republican government is able to cite. This is owing to the frequency of the monarchical form, not to its badness. Its general goodness has led to its frequency; its frequency has led to the occurrence of numerous instances of abuse. The tool or implement which is most used will offer the most numerous examples of failure, not because its mechanism is defective, but because it is subjected to the severest and most various experiments. If aristocracies and democracies had been as numerous as monarchies, the friend of monarchical government would have been able

to cite more instances of abuse in those forms of government than the friends of aristocracy and democracy could cite from monarchical states.

DEMOCRATICUS.

Your arguments may be ingenious, but I cannot admit them to be sound. You turn against me the comparative rarity of democracy; but this rarity is owing to its excellence. The selfish governing classes, already possessed of power, have taken care to prevent the establishment of democracy, because it is the most effectual security against their misgovernment. Democracy is rare exactly because it is the best form of government. Monarchs and aristocrats hate and dread it, because it prevents the abuses of their power.

MONARCHICUS.

Even supposing you prevent by democracy the class of evils which you describe, you may introduce another set of evils still more detrimental to the State. But, let me ask you, if you reject federalism, how do you propose to govern large States? Remember that the conquering democracies of antiquity did not incorporate their conquests with the Imperial State, but ruled them as dependencies.

DEMOCRATICUS.

I would place every state under a simple democratic government, unless the territory were too

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large, or too divided in its interests, for a simple government. In that case, I would place it under a democratic federal government; which, though open to serious objections, is superior to any variation of monarchical or aristocratic rule. But I confess that my ideal of human happiness is the division of mankind into a large number of small democratic States. The most obvious objection to this state of things is that it would multiply wars, and that it would impede trade. Perhaps it would produce one, or both, of these effects, at the present stage of human intelligence. But considering the great advances which European opinion has made in the last half century, it is not too sanguine to hope that civilized nations may reach a point at which the inexpediency of war and of commercial prohibitions will become manifest to them. If these very obvious truths should once become popular, the world might reap all the advantages flowing from cheap and simple democratic government, without suffering from any of the drawbacks to which a system of small States is now liable.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

I commend you for your prudence in admitting that democracy is unsuited to large States, though I cannot admire your taste in giving the preference to this form of government. My ideal of the state of things best fitted to promote human happiness is, I confess, quite different from yours.

I have no wish to wait for the arrival of that uncertain period when nations shall be sufficiently enlightened to understand the inexpediency of commercial protection and of war, and to act consistently upon their conviction. I should wish to see all despotic monarchies and all democracies (wherever they exist) converted into aristocracies, and all countries, whether large or small, placed under an aristocratic regimen. A well-organized aristocracy is regulated by the interest of the proprietary classes, more or less well understood, according to the degree of their enlightenment. In all governments the interest of the proprietary classes has indeed considerable weight; but democracy is, to a great extent, a government of sentiment, of passion, or of some senseless cry, under the influence of demagogue adventurers, who really guide the people. The danger of war would, in my opinion, be at its minimum, if all States were under an aristocratic government. An aristocratic state is most temperate, steady, and even in its policy. If indeed, like Rome, it acquires a military character, it wages war with the utmost effectiveness and tenacity. But its general tendencies are pacific.

DEMOCRATICUS.

Democracy is the natural goal of all civilized society. As men become more intelligent and orderly, the dislike of artificial and legal distinctions increases, and the desire of equality is strength-

ened. You may shut your eyes to this truth, but it will force itself gradually upon the conviction of the most reluctant. All the recent movements of society in civilized nations have been from the aristocratic to the democratic type. We may see this change in manners, in literature, in art, under a thousand different forms. An aristocratic community is therefore an uneasy community: it only subsides into rest when it has reached the definitive democratic stage. But a restless community is likely to suffer from disturbance or civil dissension at home, and to pursue a meddlesome, irritating policy abroad. Either of these two causes is likely to lead to war; and I contend that the prevalence of democracy would tend more to the maintenance of general peace among nations than the prevalence of aristocracy.

CRITO.

The two great evils of modern civilized nations are Revolution and Foreign War. Revolution almost always produces intestine conflict, of greater or less duration, and has, in its consequences, an affinity with foreign war. Both revolution and war are an appeal to force, as the ultimate arbiter; and imply a supersession of regular sovereignty. But if a government is tolerably well constituted, and is administered in a temperate and enlightened spirit, revolution may in general be avoided: ordinary skill and prudence in the heads of the state will avert this

extremity. In the present state of mankind, revolution may be regarded as a sign either of gross mismanagement of public affairs, or of some radical defect in the constitution.

Without being over-sanguine, one may look forward to a time when revolutions will be comparatively rare, and will not, whenever they occur, entail bloodshed, confiscation, or violent measures on a large scale. Foreign war, however, as it depends upon the relations of independent States, is more difficult to avert, and I confess that the obstacles to the establishment of Perpetual Peace seem to me nearly insuperable. The judgment which the public forms of the motives and acts of its own government is often erroneous. But the public is impelled both by curiosity and by interest to inform itself about its own government, and the materials provided for it, by the periodical press, are ample, and to a great extent trustworthy. Hence we find that the judgment formed of a king or a minister by his countrymen during his lifetime is generally correct, and it rarely happens that the historian of a later age can successfully reverse the verdict of contemporaries on the character of a public man. With respect to a foreign government the state of things is altogether different. A stranger is imperfectly informed as to its proceedings. He has no interest to watch its conduct; he has little curiosity about its measures. He does not read its newspapers regularly; in many cases he is even ignorant of

its language. His knowledge of its contemporary history is derived from the intelligence afforded by the newspapers of his own country. He is in general disqualified by fundamental ignorance from forming a sound opinion upon its behaviour and motives; besides which, his judgment is apt to be perverted by national prejudice, by national jealousy, and by that malignant credulity, which is particularly active in all that concerns our opinions upon foreigners. In the large volume of human folly, there is no chapter longer or more discreditable than that which contains the judgments of nations upon one another. When to this unsound substratum we superadd the consequences of a distinct sovereignty,—the absence of common tribunals, and of a common coercive rule of right; the hope of conquest or plunder; the point of national honour; the memory of national wrongs, and the desire of national vengeance;—we may see the number and force of the causes tending to produce war between independent States. The institution of ministerial departments specially charged with the conduct of foreign affairs, and the maintenance of standing embassies, though often pacific in their effects, have sometimes a warlike tendency, because they create a class of public officers who have a professional interest in watching for offences against the national honour, and in collecting proofs of the evil designs and meditated encroachments of foreign countries. The large standing armies of Europe, which have

resulted from the wars of Napoleon, however much they may drain the national wealth, do not appear to be warlike in their tendency; for Europe has never enjoyed so much peace during an equal period as in the 48 years since 1815, the epoch from which this system dates.

The world must always be divided into numerous independent states. Want of skill in the art of governing prevents barbarians from subjecting large territories to one sceptre. Among civilized nations the same effect is produced by the spirit of Nationality. Napoleon was a great general; he was also a skilful military ruler: he understood how to organize a large country so as to compel it to recruit a vast army by conscription, and to pay heavy war-taxes. But he was ignorant of the principles of civil government, and of the motives on which it rests. His notions as to the mode of governing his conquests as French dependencies were little better than infantine. To suppose that such a system could, in the existing state of the European populations, be fitted for stability, was the dream of a madman. Even, however, if Napoleon had set about consolidating his conquests with the skill and calmness of a wise statesman, he would have failed. The problem was an insoluble one.

Two methods have been devised by which, not the European nations, but newly-settled countries, or outlying semi-barbarous districts, may, to a great extent, be placed under one sovereignty—one is

the Federal method, the other is the modern English method of semi-independent dependencies. The Americans have tried to subject the larger portion of North America to a single Federal government, holding out at the same time a prospect that their "manifest destiny" will lead them to advance indefinitely southwards. This attempt has already failed. The civil war now in progress has shown that separate states so distant from each other, with populations so dissimilar, and with interests so conflicting, cannot be permanently bound together in one Federation. For communities close to one another, and with interests nearly identical, a Federal government is too loose a tie; for communities separated from one another by long spaces, and dissimilar in character and interests, a Federal government is a heavy and galling chain. The present civil war shows that the American system is ineffectual as a security against war. If the Northern and Southern States had been independent of each other, they would have been less likely to make war upon so slight a provocation; and the war, if commenced, would probably have been less destructive and more easily terminated.

The English system of dependencies is more flexible than the federal system of the Americans. Although the dependency is not on a level with the Imperial state, yet there is a less intimate connexion between their respective governments than between the government of the state and the

Federal government. The action of one government interferes less with the action of the other. The government of Canada or of Victoria interferes less with the government of England, and the government of England interferes less with the government of Canada or of Victoria, than the government of South Carolina interfered with the Federal government, and than the Federal government interfered with the government of South Carolina.

There is another material difference between the two systems. When England acquires a new dependency, either by colonization or conquest, the acquisition does not affect the composition of the Imperial government. The new institutions are confined to the dependency. Nothing is altered in England. But when a new state is aggregated to the American Union, a new set of members are brought into Congress. The balance of political parties and interests is thus deranged. It was for this reason that the Southern States attached so much importance to the doctrine that the Territories should not be free soil. If all the newly added states were to belong to the party of the North, the election of President and the votes in Congress would be materially affected. In fact, the apprehended influence of the new states upon the Federal government may be said to have been the principal cause of the present civil war.

With respect to wars, the colonial policy of England has of late years been successful in pre-

venting them in the dependencies of English origin. The war with the American colonies belongs to a period when the extent of the Imperial control was as yet undefined, and when the colonial problem had not been worked out. The Canadian war of 1837 principally grew out of the mixture of races in that province, and the feelings of the French population of Lower Canada. Our other recent colonial wars have been against neighbouring aborigines. The Indian mutiny caused a war of some duration and extent in our largest dependency; but it was not owing to Imperial misgovernment: it was caused by the superstition of the native troops, and the confidence which, from experience, was placed in their fidelity.

The modern English system of dependencies, therefore, admits of the successful government of a larger surface of the earth, as one empire, than any system which has hitherto been devised. An almost indefinite number of new dependencies might be aggregated to the British Empire, without deranging the constitution, or disturbing the action, of the Imperial government. The practical limit seems to be the expense of military and naval defence, which principally falls upon the Imperial Exchequer, and to which the dependencies (with the important exception of India) make little or no contribution.

ARISTOCRATICUS.

The comparative advantages of the Federal

and Colonial systems of government are an episode in the inquiry which you, Crito, propounded to us; and the subject is one which is too extensive for this morning's discussion. I will, therefore, only say that the comparison which you have made seems to me to be between things disparate, and therefore not properly opposed. The essence of the colonial system both of England and of other countries is to place weak communities, unfitted either by their small territory, or their recent foundation, for independence, under a mild protectorate. The conditions of this dependence are so little onerous to the colony that it observes them willingly; but there is no pretence of equality with the Imperial country. A federal Union, on the other hand, admits new states on a footing of perfect equality; and therefore a new state, of advanced civilization and large population, may be received within its circuit. Besides, the English system of "Responsible government" in colonies has not yet been tried a sufficient number of years, and in a sufficient variety of circumstances, to justify us in pronouncing a confident opinion upon its success.

DEMOCRATICUS.

The elaboration of a state of opinion which will restrain civilized states from making war on one another, is a work difficult of accomplishment, but (as I have already said) I do not regard it as hopeless. When nations are determined on war,

the doctrines of international law are but a feeble check upon them. Still the cultivation of this science, and an increased knowledge of the reciprocal rights and obligations of nations, assist in creating that state of mind which is favourable to the maintenance of peace. English writers have done much for all branches of political speculation and political economy. English lawyers, moreover, though not eminent as systematic writers, have created the only modern system of jurisprudence which is of original and indigenous growth, and is not founded upon the Roman law. International law has, however, received little cultivation from English writers. Some creditable treatises, written by Englishmen, have appeared of late years; but the leading text-book of the law of nations, in the English language, is by an American author. It is to be hoped that the creation of a chair of International Law in the University of Oxford will lead to a more systematic treatment of this important branch of political and legal science by English writers. As to the government of vast territories from a single centre, or under the control of a single imperial sovereign, I am (as I have before said) favourable to a multiplication of small states. I should wish the democratic dependencies of England to become independent, and to form separate states, as soon as they are capable of standing alone. However, our discussion on the question started by Crito has now occupied the

chief part of our morning, and I will not enter, at this time of day, upon a new subject of debate.

CRITO.

Each of you has now clearly explained his reasons for preferring his respective form of government, and I am afraid that a prolongation of this discussion would not convert any one of you from opinions which are so deeply rooted. You have at least come to an understanding with one another, and have ascertained the grounds on which each rests his conviction. Reflection upon an adversary's arguments sometimes induces us to modify an opinion, which we do not altogether abandon. Our debate, therefore, may not be entirely fruitless. I likewise, am so unfortunate as to be unable to agree altogether with any one of you. I must hold to my original faith as to the impossibility of establishing any best form of government, applicable to all communities. But difficult as I must maintain it to be, to mould any constitution of government upon an ideal standard, without reference to existing circumstances and historical associations,—unless, indeed, the conditions necessary for permanence are disregarded,—yet I am conscious that legislative science has made great progress, and that the labours of jurists and political economists have furnished the statesman with a large number of true general principles, which, if properly converted into maxims or rules of conduct, and

applied to facts, will lead to sound practical conclusions.

If we take any particular department of legislative science—such as criminal law, education, relief of the poor, finance, trade, public works, military and naval organization—we shall find that theoretical writers have established many sound general principles, which will guide the path of the statesman, and which he will be able with advantage to apply in practice. But when we ascend above these departments, and arrive at the abstract question, what is the best form of government for all communities? it seems to me that we are attempting the solution of an insoluble problem.

Each one of you, in to-day's discussion, has been able to show specious, perhaps strong, grounds in favour of his opinion. Monarchicus can say with truth that the testimony of experience is in his favour; that the vast majority of nations, now and at all former periods of time, have been governed by monarchs; and that a plural or republican government is an intricate machine, difficult to work, and constantly tending to relapse into monarchy. Aristocraticus can argue that aristocracy is the government of intelligence and virtue; and that it is a just medium between the two extremes of monarchy and democracy; while Democraticus can dwell upon the splendid vision of a community bound together by the ties of fraternity, liberty, and equality,

exempt from hereditary privilege, giving all things to merit, and presided over by a government in which all the national interests are faithfully represented. But even if I were to decide in favour of one of these forms, and against the two others, I should not find myself nearer the solution of the practical problem. A nation does not change the form of its government with the same facility that a man changes his coat. A nation in general only changes the form of its government by means of a violent revolution. This is not a moment when reason is in the ascendant, and when the claims of force can be safely disregarded. The party which is uppermost in the revolution dictates the form of government, and pays little attention to abstract theories, unless it be those which coincide with its own views. The past history of a nation, its present interests, its present passions and antipathies, the advice of favourite leaders, the intervention of foreign governments, all exercise a powerful influence at such a crisis in determining the national decision. Such is the rude process by which one form of government is actually converted into another; very unlike the gentle and rational method which is assumed by the constructors of Utopias. Besides, the political preferences of a people are in general determined by habit and mental association; and though the newly introduced constitution may be intrinsically better than its predecessor, yet the

people may dislike it, and refuse it the benefit of a fair trial. It may therefore fail, not from its own defectiveness, but through the ill-will and reluctance of those by whom it is worked.

There are some rare cases in which a nation has profited by a revolution. Such was the English revolution of 1688, in which the form of the government underwent no alteration, and the person of the king was alone changed. It was the very minimum of a revolution; it was remarkable for the absence of those accompaniments which make a revolution perilous, and which subsequently draw upon it a vindictive reactionary movement. The late Italian revolution has likewise been successful; by it the Italian people have gained a better government, and have improved their political condition. It was brought about by foreign intervention; but its success has been mainly owing to the moderation of the leaders in whom the people had the wisdom to confide, and who have steadily refrained from all revolutionary excesses.

The history of forcible attempts to improve governments is not, however, cheering. Looking back upon the course of revolutionary movements, and upon the character of their consequences, the practical conclusion which I draw is, that it is the part of wisdom and prudence to acquiesce in any form of government, which is tolerably well administered, and affords tolerable security to person and property. I would not,

indeed, yield to apathetic despair, or acquiesce in the persuasion that a merely tolerable government is incapable of improvement. I would form an individual model, suited to the character, disposition, wants, and circumstances of the country, and I would make all exertions, whether by action or by writing, within the limits of the existing law, for ameliorating its existing condition, and bringing it nearer to the model selected for imitation; but I should consider the problem of the best form of government as purely ideal, and as unconnected with practice; and should abstain from taking a ticket in the lottery of revolution, unless there was a well-founded expectation that it would come out a prize.

NOTES.

Page 44, line 2.

See Lemontey, *Monarchie de Louis XIV.*, Œuvres, tom. v. p. 37 (ed. 1829). Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, vol. xxv. p. 302 (c. 32).

P. 44, line 21.

"La maison Othomane a toujours eu cette fine politique, de ne permettre pas qu'une famille s'agrandisse et se rende puissante de père en fils; elle l'abat dès qu'elle s'est élevée, et lui ôte de bonne heure les moyens de former des parties pour troubler l'état. De là vient que, hors la maison royale des Othomans, on ne sait en Turquie ce que c'est que de noblesse et d'ancienneté de race; on ne se pique point de gloire de ce côté-là; et les charges sont données au seul mérite de la personne, sans aucune considération du sang."—Tavernier, *Relations*, tom. i. p. 435 (ed. 1692).

P. 44, line 2 from bottom.

Ap. *Stob. Anth.*, tit. 86, n. 24; tit. 88, n. 13. He gives a full definition of nobility in Rhet. 1, 5, 5.

P. 45, line 6.

See Schwegler's *Römische Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 630.

P. 48, line 2.

See a detailed description of this sanguinary affair in *Mémoires de Ferrières*, tom. i. p. 157-162 (ed. 1821); *Mémoires de Bailly*, tom. ii. p. 99-125 (ed. 1822); and the curious contemporary pamphlet, reprinted ib. p. 419-21.

P. 51, line 2 from bottom.

See *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, arts. 'Cérémonies,' 'Coutumes,' 'Démocratie,' 'Politique.' Compare Smyth's *Lectures on the French Revolution*, vol. i. p. 86 (ed. 1842).

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